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ABSTRACT

Never has the public school been asked to merely educate its students for their own benefit--a benefit determined by students' families and teachers; instead, the public schools have been expected to pursue loftier, more abstract aims that are remote to those they serve. If educational values should be determined by those responsible for children's education--particularly their parents and teachers--then process must be provided for these people to articulate their values by creating a school community. The school's constituents (administrators, teachers, students, and parents) can form this community by: (1) adopting a core of educational values; (2) transforming these values into goals and acting on them; and (3) establishing associations with one another to enhance goal achievement. The school community can unleash the family's power to boost the academic development of children, provide a safety net of support for children of negligent or disadvantaged parents, and energize teachers in their dedication to explicit aims. This document not only explores the school community meaning and the educational values on which it is premised, it also details the means by which it is created and sustained. The Franklin Elementary School Community's constitution is appended. (27 references) (KM)

Alliance for Achievement

Building the Value-Based School Community

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Academic Development Institute

The **Academic Development Institute** (ADI) is a not-for-profit organization that assists families, schools, and communities with the academic and personal development of children. The Academic Development Institute developed the Alliance for Achievement framework for building and managing a school community. This framework is employed by a network of schools, the Alliance for Achievement Network. ADI administers the network and serves as a clearinghouse for information on the concept of the school community.

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Alliance For Achievement

Building the Value-Based School Community

Part I: The Value-Based School Community

Part II: An Action Plan for Educators and Parents

Families, Schools, and Communities

The idea of community tugs strongly on the hearts and minds of Americans, an archetype planted in our collective unconscious, a comforting vestige of a bygone day, a vision of a better tomorrow. The notion of people living in the embrace of common values and mutual beneficence is an attractive, perhaps utopian, dream. But it is, nonetheless, a powerful and compelling dream.

America was once strewn with discrete and homogeneous villages. Some were Quaker villages and some Baptist. Some were German and some Irish. Some were villages of the cities – neighborhoods of Jews and neighborhoods of Italians. In immigrating to America, people settled with those most like themselves. Even the Hispanic and Asian influxes of our time follow this course. The African-American experience of forced immigration ran counter to this pattern, but when freed from slavery, African-Americans too clustered among themselves.

The new individualism has brought rewards of freedom and opportunity, but something has also been lost. Americans search for community.

Over the past four decades, the ethnically defined community has dissipated, even where ethnically identifiable residence patterns remain. More mobile, more homogenized by mass media and mass society, Americans have broken many of the bonds of ethnic community. The new individualism has brought rewards of freedom and opportunity, but something has also been lost. Americans search for community.

Today's searchers are of the generation born in the aftermath of the unifying calamity of depression and world war. As children, they listened to stories of families and friends drawing together to weather the depression. They heard of the country closing ranks to win a war. Children of the '50s carried the warm myth of community into the cold reality of fragmentation that characterized their early adulthood. The bittersweet accounts of shared misery and common victory of the '30s and '40s contrasted sharply with a world which seemed torn apart by hatred and dissension in the '60s and '70s.

Now the children of the '50s have children of their own, and these children populate the nation's schools. How do today's parents construct real communities?

How do they find common values in a world which seems to exaggerate differences? How do they reconcile their generation's puissant regard for the supremacy of the individual with their longing for collective endeavor?

The school might be a logical place to begin building community. The school is the common denominator of affiliation for families. The school is a value-laden institution, and communities are built on commonly held values. The institution of the school is sandwiched between the family and the broader society—well positioned for community. But schools have not traditionally spawned communities, and although families are affiliated with schools, they are not often bound into association by schools. Schools are juxtaposed between families and the broader society, but are far more the instruments of the broader society than of the family. Schools are value-laden, but the values are externally imposed and do not emanate from the constituents of the school itself.

Teachers want to feel that parents are sharing the yoke of childrearing with them, that everyone is pulling in the same direction, and that their efforts are respected and rewarded. They want community.

The public school is, in fact, the battleground of competing values in the larger society of America. Those who would change society first attempt to change the schools. Sometimes one group of social or political partisans takes sufficient hold of the system to alter the nature of the public school, but more often competing forces negate one another and the public school stands sterile, neutralized by the numbing compromises of the education establishment. In all of this, the primary constituents of a public school, its families and teachers, are seldom asked to come to terms with their own values and to form their schools as they would have them. They are not pressed to consider what qualities they most value in an educated human being or what methods of instruction are most likely to produce those qualities.

Perhaps the parents of today's school children can succeed in forming communities within their schools. They are both searchers for community and proponents of individualism, and these two characteristics serve community builders well. The school can be a vehicle of opportunity for the individual. The school's effectiveness is enhanced by the united, directed endeavor of a community of families and school personnel.

Perhaps the teachers of today's school children can succeed in forming communities within their schools; they are frustrated and fatigued by society's heightened demands and by their estrangement from an appreciative and supportive body of families and colleagues. Teachers want to feel that parents are sharing the yoke of childrearing with them, that everyone is pulling in the same direction, and that their efforts are respected and rewarded. They want community.

It is a novel idea that a school exists purely for the benefit of its own students. It is an alien thought that parents and teachers should determine which education-

al values most benefit their children and students. Schools have traditionally been justified on the basis of their contribution to society, not their service to their students. Educational values have been determined by society's institutions – churches, governments, and the education establishment – not by families and teachers within the particular school community.

Early American schools were extensions of the religious establishment and were based on moral/religious values; their mission was to preserve the faith. The nineteenth-century common school was an outgrowth of American nationalism and was charged with preparing an enlightened citizenry for a democratic nation. The modern public school is the tool of social reform and conforms to melioristic values. Never has the public school been asked to merely educate its students for their own benefit, a benefit determined by student's families and teachers. Instead, the public schools have been expected to pursue loftier, more abstract aims that are remote to those they serve.

If we accept the notion that a school should operate for the benefit of its own students, then we must ask what is beneficial. We must come to grips with educational values, how these values are determined, and how they affect students, teachers, and parents. If we believe that educational values should be determined by those responsible for children's education, particularly their parents and teachers, then we must provide a process for these people to articulate their values.

When something valued is also pursued, it becomes a goal. If we want educational values to become educational goals, with students, teachers, and parents actively and cooperatively pursuing them, then students, teachers, and parents must be taught effective means for their pursuit.

In expressing their educational values, the constituents of a school ignite the first flames of true community. This paper will explore the meaning of a school community, the educational values on which it is premised, and the means by which it is created and sustained. The school community can be the instrument through which collectivities of families, those whose children attend the same school, are brought into association to articulate their values and direct their attention toward their goals. As a result, both the family and the school may be strengthened.

Let us toy with the new idea that schools exist for the benefit of their students and that each school community must arrive at a set of educational values – guiding principles which articulate its ideas of what benefits its students. So as not to be muddled with abstractions, we will deal with a real school – Franklin Elementary School.

When something valued is also pursued, it becomes a goal. If we want educational values to become educational goals, with students, teachers, and parents actively and cooperatively pursuing them, then students, teachers, and parents must be taught effective means for their pursuit.

Franklin is a very ordinary school in a very ordinary town, but we will witness an extraordinary event there. So let's hurry. The good people of Franklin are waiting. Relax and let your mind take flight.

We enter the school building and make our way to the gymnasium where the rows of folding chairs are filled with parents, teachers, staff members, and administrators. At the front of the room is a podium, and beside it a portable chalk board. A man in a dark blue suit approaches the podium. Most of the crowd quiets, but a few are chit-chatting and do not notice the man's presence. He taps on the microphone to test its readiness and to alert the group that he is about to proceed. The final whispers fade into a hush.

"Your mission is to decide what you want for your students and children . . . ; what you want them to gain from their education; what you want them to possess when they leave here. In other words, what do you value in your children's education?"

"Welcome, ladies and gentlemen," he says. "Thank you for joining me this evening at Franklin Elementary School. I am delighted to be with you. Tonight, you have a special mission to accomplish. Your mission is to decide what you want for your students and children at Franklin, what you want them to gain from their education; what you want them to possess when they leave here. In other words, what do you value in your children's education? What abilities and characteristics do you believe are most desirable for all of your children to achieve? What are your educational values?"

A slight murmur ripples through the audience. That last question seemed to catch them off guard, as if they had never considered their educational values before.

The man in the blue suit forges ahead. "We won't talk about curriculum or methods of instruction or budgets or tenure policies," he says. "I just want to know what you value in your children's education. What do you want the students of Franklin to acquire? What will most benefit them?"

The room grows still. Brows furrow. Shoulders shrug. They seem perplexed. Or maybe angry. Is he suggesting that they are doing something wrong at Franklin? Doesn't he know that their achievement test scores are very near the state average? Doesn't he know that they run a tight ship? They follow every dictate from the state board of education with the greatest attention to detail. They deviate in nothing. They are, well, they are like every other school. They are a model of standardization. The man in the blue suit realizes he must still the waters.

"I know that Franklin is a wonderful school," he says. "That is why I am here." They buy it. They relax and begin to cooperate. "Perhaps I can clarify my question," he says. "I want to know what you most value in your children's education. We will make a list of your values – the educational values of the Franklin School

community. Let's keep it simple. We will limit the list to three items. Here are the ground rules." He walks to the portable blackboard and writes this definition:

SCHOOL COMMUNITY VALUES

A School Community Value is defined as an ability or characteristic that school community members believe is fundamentally desirable for all students. To be included as a School Community Value, the ability or characteristic must be:

- **Considered valuable by most, if not all, school community members;**
- **Attainable by all students;**
- **Achieved through learning, including learning at home as well as learning at school;**
- **Applicable to all areas of the school program rather than to specific subject areas;**
- **Achieved through the combined efforts of the students, parents, and teachers.**

A School Community Value is defined as an ability or characteristic that school community members believe is fundamentally desirable for all students.

He steps back from the podium, stroking his chin. Has he asked too much of them? He wonders. But no, they seem to be engaged in serious discussion among themselves. They begin whispering, then rumbling as clusters of people mull over the question. A few voices are heard above the rumbling. Finally, the boldest participants offer answers. The man tries to capture the gist of their suggestions and jots the key words on the portable blackboard near the podium. It is tough to keep them away from curriculum – children should know math and history and geography, they say. "That is fine," the man retorts, "but tonight I want to know what you value that transcends curriculum, that touches all subjects, that applies to all children."

A teacher rises and says, "Children will do well with any curriculum if they know how to study." Heads nod. The man underlines the word "Study" on the blackboard.

A father stands. "She's right. My oldest son, Arnold, he was a good student here. But when he hit high school his grades dropped like rocks. The kid didn't know how to study."

A mother raises her hand. The man in the blue suit points to her. She blushes and seems a bit embarrassed. "It is more than knowing how to study," she blurts out. "Take my Eddie. He knows how to study, I think. But he *doesn't* study." Other parents nod in assent. The man in the blue suit writes "Can and will" after the word "Study" on the blackboard.

A father in the last row stands up. "Reading is important," he says. "Maybe you call that curriculum. But if my kids don't accomplish anything else at Franklin, I want them to learn to read well, and I want them to acquire the habit of reading. I want them to enjoy reading. If they read, they will learn – regardless of the curriculum."

The man in blue agrees. "Read well, often, enjoy," he writes on the board. He explains that reading, as it has been posited here, does not refer to the subject of reading but to the skill and habit of reading, and the desire to read. It applies to all children in all subjects. It fits the criteria.

Studying, Reading, and Decency – When you begin to help your children and students acquire these characteristics, they become your goals as well as your values.

From the third row, a man jumps to his feet and begins to stride toward the podium. It is the principal. A few people clap sporadically as they see him at the podium. He pauses, draws a long breath, and gazes into the lights suspended in wire cages above his head. For a second, his mind drifts back to a night like this many years ago--a night when he was a hero in this very gym. That night, as an eighth grader, he sank the free throw that won the big game against Madison. It was at that moment he knew he was destined for leadership. His mind returns to the present, and he adjusts the microphone to his height, smiling broadly. He stretches his green, plaid sports coat over his belly and buttons it. He smooths the sports coat over his black and white, checkered trousers. He adjusts his lavender, paisley tie. Then his expression sobers, and he assumes a serious demeanor.

"I would be happy if kids learned to be decent to one another, to their teachers, to their parents, and even to me," the principal says. "If they are decent human beings, they will do well in life. If Franklin can instill in them a sense of decency, Franklin will have served them well." The group applauds. The principal seems pleased with his contribution and returns to his seat. The man in the blue suit writes "Decency" on the board.

Smiles burst out all over the room. The group seems proud of its list.

"You have come up with a very good list," the man announces from the podium. "Studying, Reading, and Decency are your School Community Values. When you begin to help your children and students acquire these characteristics, they become your goals as well as your values. Now, what can each of you do to see that your children and students acquire these qualities? What do you expect of yourselves? Let's break into two groups. One group will develop a list of what parents can do to help their children achieve these goals. A second group will develop a list of what teachers can do to help their students achieve these goals. Grab a cup of coffee and a cookie. Then join your group. When you have prepared your lists, we will discuss them."

An hour passes. Finally, a representative from each group delivers a list to the man in the blue suit. He returns to the podium and reads each item on each list. The group discusses each item and suggests changes. They make the two lists compatible. Finally, they arrive at a list of expectations for teachers and a list of expectations for parents for each of the three values. The lists are still sketchy, but it is a good start.

The man in blue calls the art teacher forward and whispers in her ear. The art teacher goes to her room and returns with a roll of newsprint. Two parents help her stretch a long sheet of paper across the wall and tape it to the wall. On the paper, the man in blue writes three headings:

STUDYING READING DECENCY

Beneath each heading he writes a goal. Under each goal he writes two subheadings: **PARENTS** and **TEACHERS**. He writes the appropriate expectations in each category:

"Wouldn't it be nice," . . . , "if children and parents and teachers read the same books and could talk about them?"

School Community Value: STUDYING

School Community Goal: For every Franklin Elementary School student to become a disciplined, skilled, and self-directed learner.

School Commmunity Expectations:

Parents	Teachers
Provide a quiet place for the child to study, with good lighting, a dictionary, paper, pencils, etc.	Assign homework frequently, related to in-class work.
Establish study time at home: minimum of 10 minutes per grade level per day, Sunday through Thursday.	Grade homework, write comments, and return it promptly.
Monitor study time; offer praise and encouragement.	Count homework toward report card grade.
	Teach students how to study.

The man moves on to the heading, **READING**, on the wall. During the discussion of the expectations for reading, a mother makes an interesting point. She says that she needs suggestions for books her children should read. She also observes that, except for textbooks, there are no books that all children read. "Wouldn't it be nice," she says, "if children and parents and teachers read the same books and could talk about them?"

The librarian suggests that a committee of parents and teachers work with her to develop a list of books – two for each grade level – that all children at that grade level should read. Parents can read these books, too. And teachers. Everyone at Franklin will be reading the same books. The books will become part of what makes Franklin special. They decide to call this a Shared Reading Program. The man in blue writes the expectations for reading:

Parents and teachers can do a better job of teaching children to be decent.

School Community Value: READING

School Community Goal: For every Franklin Elementary School student to read well, read often, and enjoy reading.

School Community Expectations:

Parents	Teachers
Read to children of all ages.	Read to children of all ages, in all subjects.
Encourage children to read to parents and siblings.	Every child reads every day.
Talk about reading with children	Discuss reading in every subject.
Read books from Shared Reading List.	Integrate the books of the Shared Reading List into lessons and activities.

Having completed the expectations for reading, the man in blue moves to the heading DECENCY on the newsprint taped to the wall. The parents and teachers have difficulty with this value. They know it is important for children to be decent, but they aren't sure how decency is developed in children.

"Some kids are just born decent; other kids are bad their whole lives," says one father.

"I don't agree," a mother responds. "Most of what we call 'decency' is learned by children. They learn to have good manners, to be courteous, to be respectful, to accept responsibility, to be fair to others. Mostly they learn by our example, but I think we could do a better job of teaching them." The group seems to agree with this mother. Parents and teachers can do a better job of teaching children to be decent.

School Community Value: DECENCY

School Community Goal: For every Franklin Elementary School student to treat other people fairly, tolerantly, and respectfully, and to use good manners and display common courtesy.

School Community Expectations:

Parents	Teachers
Demonstrate decency by example.	Demonstrate decency by example.
Teach and reinforce table manners, telephone manners, greetings, and introductions.	Teach and reinforce table manners, telephone manners, greetings, and introductions.
Teach and encourage children to pay and receive sincere compliments.	Teach and encourage children to pay and receive sincere compliments.
Encourage children to understand the perspective of other people—to be empathetic.	Encourage children to understand the perspective of other people—to be empathetic.

"[The school community] could plan in-service workshops for teachers. We could plan parent education programs, opportunities for you parents to get together to learn from each other."

As the man in blue finishes writing the expectations on the board, a father stands in the back of the room. Faces turn toward him. "I think this is great," he says. "I feel like we are really beginning to work together. But I'm not sure how all of this will go over with our kids. Frankly, my kids aren't used to studying every evening. I think it's a good idea, but I'm a little frightened. I might need some help, some suggestions from other parents." Other parents agree. He has struck a chord.

A teacher stands. "We teachers might need a little help too. I'll be interested in what the other teachers do. I'll want to know what works for them. I'll also be interested in the progress parents are making."

The principal rises. He has an idea and can't wait to share it. He bounds to the podium and grabs the microphone. "Let me make a suggestion. Why don't we elect a council of four parents and two teachers to work with me to coordinate our school community? We could plan in-service workshops for teachers. We could plan parent education programs, opportunities for you parents to get together to learn from each other. We could promote our three values and our expectations in the school newsletter. We could make the values and expectations the topics of discussion for our parent-teacher conferences." He is on a roll. His hour of leadership has arrived, and everyone in the room knows it. They applaud. The principal beams with pride. Good feeling flows through the gymnasium. A school community has been born.

A school community has been born at Franklin Elementary, not because its members have gathered in the gymnasium to eat cookies, but because they have defined commonly held values regarding the education of their children and students, and they have transformed those values into goals by accepting responsibility for their distinct and interdependent roles in the pursuit of those values.

A school community is a novel idea, but its time has come. Educators have given too much attention to the relationship of the school to society and too little attention to building a community within the school. A school's constituents – administrators, teachers, students, and parents – can form a school community by:

- **adopting a core of educational values**
- **transforming their values into goals by acting on them**
- **establishing associations with one another to enhance their abilities to achieve their goals**

The school community can unleash the family's power to boost the academic development of children, provide a safety net of support for children of negligent and disadvantaged parents, and energize teachers in their dedication to explicit aims.

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Researchers have examined the institutions of the school and the family from every angle – touching, probing, measuring, and reporting their every part and move. The relationship between the two institutions--family and school--has also been studied, and both institutions have been found wanting. Prescriptions for their repair have run in two directions: First, the school has been asked to perform more of the childrearing duties traditionally reserved for the family; second, the family has been called upon to bolster the academic performance of children.

Thus, a paradox looms. To solve the problems of the school, families must assume more responsibility for their children's learning. To solve the problems of the family, the school must assume more responsibility for childrearing. This paradox is further complicated by the dilemma of incentive effects. Simply stated, if the school does more for the family, the family has less incentive to do for itself. By the same token, if the family does more for the school, the school has less incentive to do for itself.

The problem of defining the roles of the family and the school in the development of children is not mere academic rumination. Evidence of the family's powerful influence on children's learning makes a complementary and mutually productive alliance between home and school essential to the reformation of our ailing system of public education. This can best be achieved in the context of a

school community which agrees on basic educational values, understands the roles of its members, and provides a safety net for the neediest children. A school community is essential to a school's effectiveness.

Research over the past quarter century has enabled educators to paint a vivid picture of the effective school. Using this picture as a model, educators and policy makers have reformed curricula and teaching methods. They have restructured real schools after the image of the ideal. But the educators and policy makers have too often ignored the background scenery in the picture of the ideal school. Now this scenery – clusters of homes, churches, meeting places – emerges as not just background for the effective school but the context that contributes to the school's effectiveness.

When families share associations outside the school and accept certain common values about their children's education, a true community exists and provides rich sources of support for children. True communities are rare; families with children in the same school do not necessarily associate outside the school. Because parents have little choice in the selection of schools and because public schools are typically not distinguishable by their espoused values, families whose children attend a school do not necessarily share or even consider educational values.

Today we find the school devoid of its own sense of internal community and battered by external, societal forces. It is time for schools to look inward, to tend to their most legitimate purpose – the benefit of their students.

Natural communities may be rare, but schools can create their own communities. Just as schools can replicate the curriculum and teaching methods of the ideal school, they can also build *school* communities. Schools can facilitate the dimensions of community that contribute to academic success. A school community nurtures the growth and learning of children in ways that the larger community does not. A school community draws parents together to establish new bonds that cement their ties to the school and to one another. Teachers are energized by their attachment to a school community; their sense of alienation is diminished. Their commitment to the educational goals of their school community is expanded.

The word *community* has been a part of the education lexicon since John Dewey wrote so extensively of school and community at the beginning of this century. But Dewey's intention was to unite the school with society in a way that expanded the scope of learning and changed society. Today we find the school devoid of its own sense of internal community and battered by external, societal forces. It is time for schools to look inward, to tend to their most legitimate purpose – the benefit of their students.

Administrators, staff, teachers, students, and parents are drawn together by membership in a common institution. Typically, they have little else in common and lack a sense of community among themselves. This deficiency is a symptom of a mobile, stratified society; a remote, politicized school bureaucracy; and the

This report will show how a school can form a community and how that community can be sustained.

idea that public schools exist for broad, social purposes. The absence of school community is a cause of the disappointing academic and personal development of a large segment of American youth. This report speaks to the internal community of the school, to students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators who yearn for attachment and common purpose. This report will show how a school can form a community and how that community can be sustained.

Historical Perspective

Early American Schools and Religious Values

Colonial schools were typically authorized by the civil government to fulfill the religious objectives of the Established church. Massachusetts, for example, passed a compulsory school law in 1642, requiring families to educate their children. In 1647, Massachusetts went even further, requiring that every town of fifty families provide a school master. This law, known as the "old deluder Satan act," reveals the religious value base of the colonial schools. The civil government mandated education in order to combat Satan by equipping citizens with the ability to read the scriptures (*Annals* 1: 86).

The value base of public schools was religious and moral. The purpose of the school was to serve good government and mankind.

Non-English immigrants and religious dissenters created a second category of school, still tied to religious objectives but separate from both the civil government and the Established church. These schools were parochial and sectarian. Lutherans, Quakers, Roman Catholics, and other non-Anglicans sponsored schools in order to perpetuate their religious values.

Both public schools, authorized by the civil government, and parochial schools, operated by dissenting churches, were funded primarily by parents. In effect, the early schools, both public and parochial, were religious and tuition-based. The new government of the United States maintained the connection between religion and education, even as its constitution later separated government from the Established church. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 justified the public support of schools, stating, "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged" (*Annals* 3: 194–95). The value base of public schools was religious and moral. The purpose of the school was to serve good government and mankind.

In 1798, Benjamin Rush wrote:

> "Such is my veneration for every religion that reveals the attributes of the Deity, in this or a future state of rewards and punishmen s, that I had rather see the opinions of Confucius or Mohammed inculcated upon our youth than see them grow up wholly devoid of a system of religious principles. But the religion I mean to recommend in this place is that of the New Testament" (*Annals* 4: .9).

As the nation found its own identity apart from the pluralistic array of sectarian villages and neighborhoods, the value base of the public school shifted from religion to nationalism.

The idea that religion was necessary to the proper development of a young person and that the religious citizen was necessary to enlightened, democratic society carried far into the nineteenth century. Both public and parochial schools in the first half of the nineteenth century were based on religious values. They were local in character and were funded primarily by the families of the children who attended them.

Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Ironton, Missouri, was built by German immigrants in the 1850s. The descendants of the original congregation still worship in the church today. On the second floor of the white, frame church building, the parish has preserved a classroom from the nineteenth century. A few small, wooden desks, each holding a slate board, face the teacher's desk. On the wall is a handwritten sign that says, "Lessons: Arithmetic, 3 cents per week; Spelling, 5 cents per week; Reading, 7 cents per week." With just a little imagination, one can surmise much about the community of German settlers who sent their children to this school. The teacher was someone who shared the religious values of the families she served. She was probably the pastor's wife. Her purpose was clear – to teach agreed upon subjects for an established fee while reinforcing the religious beliefs and values of the Lutheran church.

Early nineteenth-century schools, whether public or parochial, were rooted in religious values and supported by the families who received their services. As the nation found its own identity apart from the pluralistic array of sectarian villages and neighborhoods, the value base of the public school shifted from religion to nationalism.

The Common School and Democratic Values

The common school, s public schools came to be called in the nineteenth century, was an institutio .l expression of the nation's growing enthusiasm for and confidence in democracy. Its purposes were to minimize class privilege by extending basic educational opportunities to all children and to prepare an enlightened citizenry so that the national experiment with democracy could be

realized. The common school movement rose out of a nationalistic desire to Americanize an increasingly diverse populace. The religious objectives of the traditional American school were replaced by secular values, although the dominant Protestant ethical system remained strongly in evidence.

Horace Mann, the Massachusetts educator and father of the common school, realized that the public school could not permit the divergent religious and political beliefs of its constituents to tear at its seams; neither could it stand without a value base of its own. "Mann was tremendously impressed with the diversity of the American people. Yet he feared that conflicts of value might rip them apart and render them powerless. Dreading the destructive possibilities of religious, political, and class difference, he sought a common value system within which diversity might flourish. His quest was for a new public philosophy, a sense of community to be shared by Americans of every background and persuasion. And his instrument in this effort would be the common school" (Cremin, *Transformation* 9).

As families moved away from a subsistence economy that relied on children's work in the home, parents had less reason to resist the school. Parents wanted their children to rise above the situation of the family with the help of the common school.

In its role as a guardian against excessive class privilege, the common school was seen as the liberator of children from the limitations and even neglect of their families. For the most part, this role did not create conflict between the school and the family. Instead, families looked to the school with hope and expected the school to be a vehicle of social mobility. As families moved away from a subsistence economy that relied on children's work in the home, parents had less reason to resist the school. Parents wanted their children to rise above the situation of the family with the help of the common school. Some groups, particularly Roman Catholics, sought schooling that maintained a stronger value attachment to the family. These groups maintained their own schools, continuing a more direct lineage with the religious/moral value base of the colonial and early American schools.

The common school went hand-in-hand with the concept of universal education. The state should require that all children attend school. No child should be deprived of an education because his parents want him at home to work or because his parents lack the discipline or the will to see that he goes to school. The state should intervene on behalf of the child to compensate for the deficiencies of the family. As the common school spread, so did the idea of universal education. Universal education was society's front-line safety net.

Universal education was only one side of the coin of educational opportunity. Deciding that all children should attend school for the sake of the polity, Americans then argued over who should pay the cost of schooling. The notion of public financial support for schools was not widely accepted in the nineteenth century. Many Americans still considered the cost of education to be the family's responsibility. Public support was thought to be necessary only for the children

of paupers, to whom the state had an obligation to provide the opportunity of education, thus allowing the child to exceed the economic condition of his parents.

The proponents of publicly financed education gradually won out. The common school became tied to the ideas of universal education and public support of schools. First elementary schools, then high schools and colleges, were founded with public financial support.

Advocates of more state control argued that the state could impose higher standards than local bodies. Advocates of local control feared that essential ties to the family and the community would be lost if the state assumed greater authority over the schools.

The common school concept was more than the notion of universal, publicly financed education. It also embraced a clear philosophy of curriculum, instruction, and school governance. Based in American essentialism, the common school curriculum emphasized a grounding in the basics--reading, writing, and arithmetic. During the mid-nineteenth century, this common core of subjects was expanded to include spelling, geography, history and government. The new subjects reflected the growing influence of those who advocated public education as preparation for citizenship. By the end of the century, the common school model had expanded even further, including the natural sciences and rudimentary courses in the practical arts. Each time the curriculum was expanded, opponents of the expansion warned of the dangers of moving away from common knowledge – subject matter that was appropriate for everyone.

Underlying the concept of the common school was a belief in common learning, the same curriculum for all students. Proponents of common learning were suspicious of an expanding curriculum, especially one that offered alternative courses of study. If public support for education was predicated on the desire to reduce class advantage and promote equal opportunity, how could these ends be achieved when students received different courses of study? Vocational education came under particular attack from common school quarters because it asked the government to fund preparation for specific occupations, a responsibility formerly left to families, businesses, and guilds. Vocational education was also thought to exaggerate class differences by tracking working-class children into separate courses of study from middle-class children.

Control and governance of the public schools were subjects of considerable contention in the nineteenth century. Because the states had constitutional responsibility for education and the expansion of universal education had created more complicated funding needs, there was a tendency toward greater state control of education. This trend ran counter to the tradition of local control and local support. Advocates of more state control argued that the state could impose higher standards than local bodies. Advocates of local control feared that essential ties to the family and the community would be lost if the state assumed greater authority over the schools.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Americans arrived at a compromise for the control of their schools. School districts were formed as agencies of the state but were governed by locally elected boards with the power to levy taxes. Under this arrangement, both advocates of state control and proponents of local control claimed some degree of victory. The state could still impose minimum standards, and the local district could reflect the uniqueness of the community its board members represented. Since the time this compromise was achieved, public education has strived for a proper balance between state and local control.

The success of the common school depended on its ability to replace the parochial values of diverse religious, ethnic, and class groups with more abstract and remote values of democracy, citizenship, social ethics, and general literacy. The common school concept soon seemed archaic, static, and unresponsive to legitimate diversity of educational needs. What followed, however, perpetuated the common school's flaw – its intolerance of pluralism – while abandoning its strength – a coherent purpose.

In the twentieth century, the purpose of the public school has been obfuscated by changing views of the government's ability to ameliorate social conditions.

The Modern Public School and Social Values

In the twentieth century, the purpose of the public school has been obfuscated by changing views of the government's ability to ameliorate social conditions. The century began with the optimistic spirit of the progressive era. Filled with the successes of the past century of nation-building, America was confident of its capacity for national self-improvement. The experiment in democracy was working; the west was won, giant industries were being built, slavery had been abolished, and millions of immigrants were providing a ready supply of labor. At the same time that the nation was feeling good about its accomplishments, muckraking journalists and social reformers were pointing to problems that begged for solution. The schools became part of everyone's proposed solution.

The progressive spirit spilled into the schools. Indeed, the schools were viewed increasingly as vehicles of social reform. "Proponents of virtually every progressive cause from the 1890s through World War I had their program for the school. Humanitarians of every stripe saw education at the heart of their effort toward social alleviation" (Cremin, *Transformation* 85). As society intruded more heavily on the common school, the delicate balance of factors that sustained the common school was disturbed. The common curriculum gave way to courses that fitted the needs of special interests. The local character of the school was tolerated only to the extent that it did not inhibit movement toward larger societal aims.

The progressive movement in education fell into disrepute by the end of World War II, but its philosophy had become so entrenched in the education establishment that it persists even today. Americans still look to their schools to redress social injustice. Schools have been instruments of desegregation. Schools have helped shatter barriers to the handicapped. Schools have leveled differences in the treatment of the sexes. Schools have been asked to stem the tide of teen-age pregnancy, eradicate drug abuse, and attack unemployment. These goals are worthy, and public education may count major accomplishments in the pursuit of these goals, but the impression that schools exist to ameliorate social ills has kept schools away from a focus on the benefit to individual students. Most damaged of all have been the relationships among the members of the school – teachers, administrators, parents, and students. For the greater part of the twentieth century, educators have sought to reconcile the school with society rather than to orchestrate the components of the school itself.

The impression that schools exist to ameliorate social ills has kept schools away from a focus on the benefit to individual students. Most damaged of all have been the relationships among the members of the school – teachers, administrators, parents, and students.

John Dewey gave voice and impetus to the reconciliation of school and society, declaring in 1916 that, "As societies become more complex in structure and resources, the need of formal or intentional teaching and learning increases. As formal teaching and training grow in extent, there is the danger of creating an undesirable split between the experience gained in more direct associations and what is acquired in school" (*Democracy and Education* 11). Dewey's prescription was a wedding of the school to society, a unification of school teaching and the educational experiences of life outside the school.

The education historian, Lawrence Cremin, in his 1975 lecture to the John Dewey Society, asserted that in seeking to reconcile school and society, Dewey had, in fact, contributed to their separation. "Dewey's theory of education," he said, "is ultimately a theory of school and society. And while Dewey was primarily concerned with reconciling the dualism between school and society, I would stress the fact that he may have left us with the theoretical polarity in the very process of attempting the reconciliation" (*Public Education* 5).

Whether the dualism of school and society was a real problem or a theoretical construct, the idea of reconciliation has dominated education theory for three-quarters of a century. Consequently, the greater problem of contemporary education, the lack of internal school community, has been given short shrift.

The wall between the school and the larger society has crumbled from continuous assault on the school by social forces. The school has conformed to a bland uniformity, reflecting neither the ethos of its immediate cultural context nor the common values of its members. "Public elementary and secondary schools sink to the lowest common denominator in the political process. Because they must be all things to all people, they lose their identity, their autonomy, and eventually, their integrity" (Kearns and Doyle 17).

Left bare of community by societal invasion, the school has suffered further from changes in the institution of the family for which it has provided no compensation. Evidence of the structural deficiencies in the school community came with the Coleman Report of 1966, a massive study of American schools authorized by Congress in conjunction with its Civil Rights Act of 1964. After surveying 650,000 students, 60,000 teachers and 4,000 schools across the nation, the Coleman Report concluded that "academic outcomes depend in large part on the family background, peer group, and community values children bring to school, that minority students tend not to bring the proper baggage, and that 'throwing money' at the schools attended by poor students does not magically alter their low attainments" (Sewall 46). The background scenery of the school was far more significant in a child's academic achievement than had previously been assumed. The school was far less effective in compensating for disparate social conditions than some had hoped.

Left bare of community by societal invasion, the school has suffered further from changes in the institution of the family for which it has provided no compensation.

The Coleman Report turned researchers toward an examination of what constituted an effective school. If spending more money in the same old ways would not advance the social agenda, how could the school's resources be used most effectively? If the family had a powerful effect on a child's learning, what aspects of family contributed to academic achievement? Could schools be reformed after models of proven effectiveness? Could families adopt the practices of parents whose children succeed in school?

The effective-schools research of the 1970s resulted in a list of characteristics shared by successful schools. A seven-year longitudinal study of secondary schools, *Fifteen Thousand Hours*, was published in 1979 by University of London psychologist Michael Rutter. The study was based on English secondary schools, but its implications were universal. Rutter's findings echoed those of Coleman in concluding that financial resources were not strong determinants of academic achievement and that learning was tied to family background. But Rutter also noted that students of low ability did as well in good schools as students of high ability did in poor schools. In other words, schools did make a difference.

The difference between good schools and poor schools, according to Rutter, was found in the very ethos of the school. In effective schools, expectations were high and consistently applied; teachers and students were seriously and positively engaged in the work of the school; classrooms were orderly; homework was assigned regularly; students were closely monitored and evaluated; and mastery of academic content was expected. Class time was considered precious in the effective schools; every minute counted.

In 1981, James S. Coleman again entered the fray with a series of publications based on an extensive study of public and private schools. Coleman demonstrated that Catholic schools were more effective than public schools with children of all

socioeconomic backgrounds. The Catholic schools spent less money per student but achieved higher test scores and lower drop-out rates. The fact that Catholic schools obtained these impressive results even in inner-city schools where students were typically non-Catholic and from low socioeconomic, black and Hispanic backgrounds showed that the Catholic school success was due neither to the religious nor the socioeconomic background of its students. Instead, the success was due to conditions of the schools. Catholic schools nurtured a cohesive sense of community that included adults as well as children. "All these results emphasize the importance of the embeddedness of young persons in the enclaves of adults most proximate to them, first and most prominently the family and second, a surrounding community of adults" (Coleman and Hoffer 229).

Unlike A Nation at Risk, *Walberg did more than ask parents for their cooperation; he contended that schools should take the initiative in establishing partnerships with the home.*

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released its report, *A Nation at Risk*. This report was a perfect meshing of the century old idea that schools exist to advance national aims and the contemporary research on school effectiveness. The report had a profound effect on American politics, generating in its wake some 300 reports by state commissions and education reform legislation in virtually every state. The report's ultimate impact on education is yet to be determined, but the initiative for change in education has shifted dramatically toward the states, and education has become a central issue in American politics.

A Nation at Risk reaffirmed the primacy of the family in the child's education, even while confining its concrete recommendations to reform of the school. Calling for a shake-up of the nation's faltering system of education, the report looked to the parents and students for assistance. "Obviously, faculty members and administrators, along with policy makers and the mass media, will play a crucial role in the reform of the educational system. But even more important is the role of parents and students" (34). The report went on to spell out the role of parents. Parents were to instill in their children a respect for learning, habits of study, the ability to set goals and work diligently. Parents were to participate in their children's education, monitoring their progress and encouraging their achievement. Interestingly, while the report focused on changes in the school, its expectations of the family touched most directly on the factors that researchers find to have the greatest impact on a child's learning – attitudes, values, habits.

In 1984, Herbert J. Walberg, a professor at the University of Illinois/Chicago, published an article in the *Phi Delta Kappan* that summarized the research on the family's impact on learning. The appearance of this article in a journal widely read by education practitioners did much to put in focus the necessity for new partnerships between the school and the family. Like *A Nation at Risk*, Walberg justified changes in education practices by asserting education's connection to national economic development. Unlike *A Nation at Risk*, Walberg did more than ask parents for their cooperation; he contended that schools should take the initiative in establishing partnerships with the home. "Research shows that both

home conditions that are conducive to learning and the relationship of the home to the school have deteriorated in recent decades, but school/home partnership programs can bring about dramatic improvements," Walberg stated (98). Walberg claimed not only that the home environment strongly affects a child's learning, he proclaimed that schools could influence the home environment by establishing partnerships with families.

With Walberg's article, the tide had turned. The relationship between family background and academic achievement was no longer in doubt, and the effective school was now seen as one that did something to influence family practices. The 1961 Coleman Report and the subsequent effective-school research were synthesized.

By the mid-1980s, the school's effectiveness had been convincingly linked to: (1) its ethos of academic expectation, and (2) its ability to nurture a cohesive community of teachers, students, and parents.

In 1986, the U.S. Department of Education released *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning*, a booklet that clearly summarized research findings and listed the practical implications for key areas of schooling and learning. Herbert Walberg was a principal contributor to the tract. *What Works* was organized into three sections: Home, Classroom, and School. The fact that "Home" was given top billing demonstrates Walberg's influence and the growing synthesis of effective-schools and family-background research. "Effective schools," stated *What Works*, "are places where principals, teachers, students, and parents agree on the goals, methods, and content of schooling. They are united in recognizing the importance of a coherent curriculum, public recognition for students who succeed, promoting a sense of school pride, and protecting school time for learning" (45).

Joyce L. Epstein, from the Center for Social Organization of Schools at The Johns Hopkins University, reiterated the idea that schools should take the initiative in procuring parent participation in the child's schooling. In her article "Parent Involvement: What Research Says to Administrators" in the February, 1987, *Education and Urban Society*, Epstein masterfully summarized the research connecting parent involvement to effective education. She then set down specific actions that administrators, particularly principals, could take to enhance parent participation. "Administrators can help teachers successfully involve parents by coordinating, managing, supporting, funding, and recognizing parent involvement" (133).

America entered the twentieth century with the progressive passion for correcting social ills through the institution of the school. By the mid-1980s, the school's effectiveness had been convincingly linked to: (1) its ethos of academic expectation, and (2) its ability to nurture a cohesive community of teachers, students, and parents. The time was ripe for a merging of the public school's several historical models.

The School Community

The School Community and Educ al Values

American public schools have evolved from a re .us/moral value base to a political/democratic value base to a social/meliorist alue base. Each value base made its contributions to American society, and each had inherent flaws. The early American schools solidified the ethical foundation of the nation and established a tradition of local control of education. The parochialism of the early schools could not, however, survive in a pluralistic society The common schools provided a vehicle for social mobility, strengthened the democratic foundation of a young nation, and demonstrated the utility of essential education. But the common school diminished real community by imposing political abstractions on a people that remained pluralistic and self- interested. The modern school has been instrumental in addressing social injustices and has made universal educational opportunity a reality. But in serving as an instrument of social reform, the modern school has become a slave to remote and shifting social and political forces. The modern school lacks clear educational goals and is too little concerned with the values of its immediate constituen

The time has come for a new public school model. The value base of the public school must shift toward the educational values of the individual school community.

The time has come for a new public school model. The value base of the public school must shift toward the educational values of the individual school community. The school must exist for the benefit of its own students as determined, primarily, by t' ose students' parents and teachers.

The school community can retain the contributions of its antecedents while rectifying many of their flaws. Local control and the essential moral underpinnings of the early American school fit nicely with the school-community concept, but so does religious and ethnic pluralism. The common school's democratic intent is fully realized in the school community, where families and educators share in the decision-making process, but the school community determines its own values and pursues them in its own way, avoiding the cookie-cutter sameness the common school bred. The modern public school's commitment to universal educa-

tion is enhanced in the school community while excessive, external pressures are buffered by a cohesive, internal sense of purpose and belonging.

Families and the School Community

The public school's two centuries of organic evolution and the mountains of research notwithstanding, families and schools remain rough at their edges of contact. The relationship between the family and the school is not sharply drawn.

As the modern public school has rediscovered the importance of the family to the child's academic achievement, new overtures have been made to "parental involvement." The very term, "parental involvement," signals the perspective from which the education establishment has approached families. Belatedly and with a peculiar air of condescension, educators are permitting parents to be "involved" in their children's education. Times have changed since the days when parents employed teachers to teach what the community of families deemed necessary.

Responsibility for this shift in the relationship between family and school does not lie with the education establishment alone. Parents have eagerly disengaged themselves from the education of their children and have willingly turned over more childrearing responsibilities to the schools. The schools have then become convenient targets for criticism when the expectations of the disengaged parents have not been met.

Unfortunately, a satisfactory and generally-accepted conceptual framework for the relationship of family to school has not been attained. Instead, the school is uneasy about its connection to the families it serves, and the family's ties to the school are tenuous and confused. The public school's two centuries of organic evolution and the mountains of research notwithstanding, families and schools remain rough at their edges of contact. The relationship between the family and the school is not sharply drawn.

Throughout this nation's history, the family has been the engine of American aspiration, with successive generations of parents expecting education to grease the rails of social mobility. These parents and their children have been met at the schoolhouse door by every religious, political, and social force that has vied for power and influence in America. The school has been the battleground on which political and social interests have collided. The little red schoolhouse has been a turbulent cauldron, boiling with the passions of the family's intimate hopes for its children and the polity's fiercest contests over competing visions.

In their report, *Becoming an Adult in a Changing Society*, James S. Coleman and Torsten Husen describe three phases of family-school relationships which correspond to three levels of economic development. In Phase I, the family lives at a subsistence level, relying on children for work. Phase I families limit the growth

of the child, and the school's role is to free the child from his family and expand the possibilities for his development. In Phase II, the industrial economy, the goals of the family and the school converge, with both institutions seeking the improvement of the child's ultimate economic situation. In Phase III, post- industrial affluence, parents view childrearing as an impediment to the pursuits of their adult lives and invest little time and energy in the development of their children. They expect the school to fill the void.

Coleman and Husen provide their categories as an analysis of changes in families through the economic evolution of their societies. Altering this analysis to view the three phases as categories, or types, of family-school relationship, we can see that all three exist in American society. The welfare state has rescued Type I families from a subsistence economy, but they live at a survival level, overwhelmed by the daily demands of the world which they are unprepared to meet. Type II families retain the value system of the multi-generational, intact family. Type III families are the norm in the new world of mobile families, working mothers, divorce, and self-indulgence.

Fathers and, later, mothers specialized in earning money through their professions, and schools assumed a greater share of the responsibility for producing educated and well-adjusted young people. The logical next step was for parents, relieved of childrearing responsibilities, to focus more of their attention on their own lives.

Schools today feel pressure from both Type II and Type III families. Type II parents seek a greater role in the education of their children, and Type III parents expect the school to assume a greater responsibility for their children's development. Type I families tend not to press demands on the school, but their children are most in need of support.

Sociological studies of suburbs in the 1950s (see Seeley, et al.) anticipated the trend in the evolution of the family's relationship to the school from Type II to Type III. As the suburbs were formed after World War II, families centered their lives around the schools. School administrators, counselors, and teachers were viewed as specialized experts, like pediatricians and orthodontists, who were part of the suburban dream of a better life for the children. Gradually, these experts were called upon to play a larger role in the child's life, to make decisions once reserved to the family. As the family became less certain of its purpose in the child's rearing, it turned more to the experts, including school personnel. The suburbs became collectivities of specialists. Fathers and, later, mothers specialized in earning money through their professions, and schools assumed a greater share of the responsibility for producing educated and well-adjusted young people. The logical next step was for parents, relieved of childrearing responsibilities, to focus more of their attention on their own lives.

While the suburban schools have witnessed a shift from Type II to Type III families, the inner-city schools are dealing with an ever-higher concentration of Type I families. The central task of the inner-city school is to elevate the child from the socioeconomic level of his family through education. This task is similar to that of the nineteenth-century common schools.

The family and the school both seek to acculturate and liberate young people, but each institution performs particular tasks best. The family is most effective in instilling values, attitudes, and habits in children. . . . The school is most effective in teaching specific skills and conveying knowledge that requires structure and sequence.

The family and the school both seek to acculturate and liberate young people, but each institution performs particular tasks best. The family is most effective in instilling values, attitudes, and habits in children. Type I parents are incompetent in fulfilling these tasks, and Type III parents have retreated from them. Thus, these tasks have fallen on the school to perform. Sadly, the school is less adept than the family at nurturing values, attitudes, and habits. This inefficient shift in responsibility may have contributed to the steady rise in teenage drug problems, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, and school dropouts – all symptoms of inadequate formation of values, attitudes, and habits.

The school is most effective in teaching specific skills and conveying knowledge that requires structure and sequence. Schools are best at teaching subject matter to children. As schools are drawn away from this central task, their ability to teach and inform children is diminished. If society expects families to compensate for the school's diminished ability to teach subject matter, it shifts responsibility for teaching away from the institution that does it best.

The three-type categorization of families is instructive, and the divergent desires and expectations of the three family types illustrate the dilemma facing the school. Another force complicates the situation further. As the children of Type I families need more from the school, and the parents of Type III families demand more from the school, the school polity is increasingly disinclined to grant greater resources to the school. Considering the fact that 75% of voters have no children in school, the conflict between the interests of many families and the interests of the majority of the school polity is evident. The vast majority of people who must approve tax increases for the support of public education have no children in public schools. They have been increasingly reluctant to pay for schools to assume greater responsibility for childrearing as opposed to education. In the November elections of 1988, only one-third of school tax referenda in Illinois were passed.

If the school assumes greater responsibility for tasks that the family could perform, then the family is less inclined to perform them. If the school refuses to perform these tasks, then some children are neglected by both the school and the family. If the school assumes greater responsibility for tasks that are needed by Type I children and demanded by Type III parents, the school polity may be unwilling to fund these expanded services. A solution lies in the formation of consistent role expectations within a more cohesive school community, education for both parents and school personnel in the fulfillment of these expectations, and a safety net for children who remain neglected. The solution lies in building strong school communities.

The child who arrives at school impressed by the importance of learning, confident of his ability to affect the world around him, and capable of disciplined work,

has been well prepared by his family to learn and succeed in school. The family has done its job to that point, and if the family continues to reinforce the value of education, the attitude of efficacy, and the habit of sustained effort, the family's primary obligations have been fulfilled. If the school can assist families in meeting these obligations, the school will be able to concentrate on what it does best – teach subject matter.

In creating a school community, a new category of family is developed. Members of this new category are drawn from Type I, Type II, and Type III. This new category of family might be called Type IV. Type IV includes the Type I parents who *learn*, through the school community's parent education programs, to provide the support their children need to fully benefit from their school education. Type IV includes the Type II parents whose desire for greater involvement in their children's education is made effective by parent education. Type IV includes the Type III parents who are drawn by the explicit expectations of the school community into a responsible involvement with their children's education

If the family continues to reinforce the value of education, the attitude of efficacy, and the habit of sustained effort, the family's primary obligations have been fulfilled. If the school can assist families in meeting these obligations, the school will be able to concentrate on what it does best – teach subject matter.

Not all parents will respond in the ways described above. Some Type I parents will simply refuse to learn to support their children's educational development or will be so limited in their personal capacities that they cannot provide the support their children need. Some Type II parents will resist channeling their urge for involvement toward the educational values of the school community. Some Type III parents will not sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of their children. But by developing the Type IV families, a safety net is created for the children of parents who do not buy into the school community's values. Community norms become explicit and substantial.

Type I families are typically poor and often struggling to survive in bleak circumstances. Poverty, however, is not as great an obstacle to successful childrearing as the lack of social skills, social contacts, and models of good childrearing practices. Type I parents tend to perpetuate their childhood experiences with families and schools. They continue the parent-child relationships they witnessed in their own upbringings. For them, the school is a repository of past failures and bad feelings. To convert Type I families to Type IV families, schools must first overcome the fears and resentments Type I parents hold toward the institution of the school.

A Chicago elementary school principal tells the story of an irate father who met him at the school door early one winter morning. The father had obviously fortified himself with alcohol before mustering the courage to confront the principal about a disciplinary action taken against his son. As the principal made his way into his office, the father ranted. Entering the office, the principal offered the man a cup of coffee. The man declined harshly and continued his raging diatribe.

The principal remained calm, poured himself a cup of coffee, sat down at a table, and invited his guest to have a seat next to him.

Again the principal offered the father a cup of coffee, and this time the man assented. As the two sipped coffee, the tone of the conversation mellowed. The father spoke openly of his own failures in school as a boy – poor grades and disciplinary problems that led to his dropping out. The father shared his sense of disappointment, frustration, embarrassment, and anger as he watched his son following the same path. Eventually the principal and the father resolved the matter that had caused the aggravation on this day, and as the father departed, he said, "Thank you. I'll always remember that you were the school man who had a cup of coffee with me."

[Parents] need genuine, personal expressions of good-will from school personnel and other parents. They must be provided . . good experiences with schools and school people.

The principal's story has two lessons: First, some parents have known nothing but failure, disappointment, and wrenching defeat in their lifetime of experience with schools. Second, most parents will respond to sincere gestures of human cordiality and respect. Type I parents need parent education programs that show them how to relate to their children. But first they need genuine, personal expressions of good-will from school personnel and other parents. They must be provided a few good experiences with schools and school people.

Type II families may seem to be the ideal in home-school relations. Their goals and those of the school are confluent; they are willing to do their part in rearing their children and in seeing that their children are educated. But Type II parents present a problem because they are dwindling in numbers, they stand outside the mainstream of cultural trends, and they are apt to be very frustrated when their demands for a greater role in their children's education is viewed as bothersome by school personnel. Indeed, Type II parents are most inclined to flee the public schools, opting instead for private schools or home-bound schooling. When their children remain in the public schools, Type II parents stick out, often like sore thumbs. Schools have grown accustomed to parents who remain detached; Type II parents are curious anomalies. If the Type II parent's desire for involvement is left unchanneled, the resulting frustration may produce a fractious relationship with the school. Principals often handle this problem by assigning Type II parents to the busywork of parent organization committees and taffy apple sales.

The challenge of the school community is to channel the efforts of Type II parents toward activities that benefit the academic and personal development of their own children and of other children in the school community. Type II parents make wonderful leaders for parent education programs. When they become engaged in productive activities that benefit children in the school community, Type II parents enter Type IV.

After completing a parent education course at her children's school in a rural community, a mother quickly volunteered to be a group leader when the course was offered again. Asked why she was so eager to teach the course to other parents, she said, "My kids are growing up with the children of these other parents. The better parents they are, the better environment my children will have. I can help other parents help their children, and my children will gain in the process." This Type II mother understood the meaning of a school community, and she became a valuable Type IV parent.

Type III parents receive little sympathy from school personnel or from other parents. In fact, Type III parents probably deserve little sympathy, but their children are distinctly disadvantaged and in need of community support. Type III parents have much to offer their children and much to offer the school community. They have financial resources, education, social contacts, and professional skills. Unfortunately, these assets do not compensate for their inattention to their children and are seldom placed at the disposal of the school community. Type III parents must be converted into Type IV parents by means that are nearly spiritual. Their conversion comes through the heart. They must be forced into intimate relationships with their children to remind them of the satisfaction they deny themselves by relegating childrearing responsibilities to others. They must be enticed to make their abilities available to the school community so they can feel the personal satisfaction of their giving.

The family is more effective than the school in nurturing the child's habits, attitudes, and values. Because certain habits, attitudes, and values are essential to learning, it is in the school's interest to enhance the family's ability to nurture them.

A Type III father who enrolled in a parent education program at his wife's insistence told the group leader at the conclusion of the course that he had learned nothing new except that his son was more dear to him than he had realized. He said that he and his son had not had a heartfelt conversation in two years, and that both he and his son had lost a great deal as a consequence. The parent education course, this father reported, had forced him to do what he knew in his mind he should do—take time for his family. He had learned nothing new, but he had been prompted to change his behavior to conform to what he already knew. In the process, he had regained an intimacy with his son. This father was now ready to be a resource to the school community. He would be a great group leader in the parent education program as he had just entered Type IV.

Parent education is the common denominator in transforming families of various phases into Type IV families. The dilemma of incentive effects is broken by educating parents in order to facilitate their children's learning. The family is more effective than the school in nurturing the child's habits, attitudes, and values. Because certain habits, attitudes, and values are essential to learning, it is in the school's interest to enhance the family's ability to nurture them. The school is most effective at structuring and transmitting knowledge. The school can develop parent education programs that make knowledge about effective

childrearing accessible to parents. Through parent education, Type IV families will emerge to put flesh on the skeleton of the school community.

Teachers and The School Community

Teacher burnout is the topic of frequent articles in education journals and in the popular press. The stressors endured by teachers cannot be minimized. Public scrutiny of schools and waning public confidence in public education deprive teachers of the blanket of respect the profession once enjoyed. Deterioration in the family's ability to provide their children with the foundation of values, attitudes, and habits necessary to learning has placed greater demands on the classroom teacher. Stagnant resources for education have kept the financial rewards of teaching less than appealing. Declining enrollments and financial retrenchment have reduced the opportunities for employment and mobility in the teaching profession.

As teaching has become a more demanding job and as the rewards of teaching have declined, teachers have sought comfort among their own ranks, turning to national organizations for remedy and consolation. As a result, the cleavage between the local community and its teachers has grown.

As teaching has become a more demanding job and as the rewards of teaching have declined, teachers have sought comfort among their own ranks, turning to national organizations for remedy and consolation. As a result, the cleavage between the local community and its teachers has grown. Unfortunately, this separation has been detrimental to the sense of community that must undergird the effective school and has contributed to the teachers' own feeling of alienation.

Holt, Fine, and Tollefson addressed the question of teacher stress and burnout:

> "A stated concern of the . . . study was the need to provide additional information about teacher burnout and how to prevent it. One premise of the study was that many stressful aspects of teaching would not change or would change rather slowly; therefore, emphasis should be placed on how a teacher can deal with stress. This implies a proactive, rather than reactive, stance by individual teachers, school districts, and teacher training institutions. It also suggests a philosophical shift toward viewing humans as capable of showing initiative and resilience in response to accumulated stress, rather than being vulnerable and passive victims" (57).

The study found that "hardy" individuals withstood the stress of teaching and displayed less burnout than nonhardy individuals. In other words, aspects of the individual teacher's personality tended to mediate against adverse consequences of stress. Burnout was most common among teachers who felt alienated from their immediate environment. "Those teachers who felt more involved in the various aspects of their life, including work, self, family, interpersonal relation-

ships, and social institutions, seemed able to combat some of the wearing effects of a stressful work situation" (56).

Teachers, concluded the study's authors, did not need quick-fix interventions "such as teacher discussion groups, which, while allowing opportunities for ventilation, sharing, and support, do little to alter the external stress on teachers or the teacher's capacity to cope" (57). Instead, teachers needed attachment to community, a more emotionally supportive environment, in-service workshops that promote active responses to stress, and encouragement to decrease their sense of alienation by engaging themselves in the challenges of their profession.

Teachers [need] attachment to community, a more emotionally supportive environment, in-service workshops that promote active responses to stress, and encouragement to decrease their sense of alienation by engaging themselves in the challenges of their profession.

The school community can provide teachers a supportive environment that reaches beyond the security of the teachers' lounge. The school community draws teachers into a purposeful enterprise with administrators, students, and parents. The school community holds clear values that inspire commitment. The school community encourages positive associations among its members that enhance self-worth and offer opportunities for the expression of mutual respect and appreciation.

Teachers care more about other people's opinions of them than they often let on. After all, they have chosen a "people" profession. By buffering themselves from the parents of their students, teachers often deprive themselves of some of the most gratifying personal contacts their profession has to offer. When a parent's child has been helped by a teacher, the parent is appreciative beyond bounds. Too seldom, however, does that parent have the opportunity take the time to express his or her appreciation. Consequently, teachers too seldom receive the pat on the back they deserve.

A Chicago teacher coordinated a parent education program that was new in her school. The course focused on the parent's role in developing the child's habit of reading. Parents were encouraged to take their children to the library. Because some parents were not familiar with the neighborhood library, the group decided to visit the library at the end of their last session so they could prepare for a later trip with their families. One mother offered to host the group in her home following the visit to the library. The teacher went along. Afterwards, she reported to her colleagues that this was the first time in her thirty years of teaching that she had visited the home of a student's parent. She gushed with the good feelings that had attended the visit. "The mother made tea for us and showed us photographs of her family. She was so honored that I had entered her home. I felt a closeness to these families that I have never felt before. Why did I wait so long to get to know them?"

The school community is a source of support for teachers; it is a reservoir of gratification. The school community brings families and school personnel

together for a central and noble purpose – to enhance the academic and personal development of the children they share. This mutual mission cuts away the alienation and self-doubt that permeate so many teachers' lives. The school community does much to compensate teachers for the rigors, frustrations, disappointments, and stresses of their work.

Students and The School Community

"We" do our best to help "them," but we do it within a conceptual dichotomy that separates "us" from "them." The school community, however, draws "us" and "them" together.

In viewing schools as instruments of social correction, an "us and them" mentality is inherent. School officials, policy makers, teachers, and involved parents seek to help the disadvantaged, unmotivated, impoverished, under-educated, and disengaged children and their families. "We" do our best to help "them," but we do it within a conceptual dichotomy that separates "us" from "them." The school community, however, draws "us" and "them" together.

Patricia Gandara, professor of education at California State University at Sacramento, addresses the typical "us" and "them" dichotomy eloquently. "The reason for redefining those children as our children is not solely to make them more likely objects of our largess, but to help us redefine ourselves as a community of people" (40). Calling for a new definition of the school community that erases the dichotomy, Gandara asserts that, "It is unlikely that poor families alone will be able to change the educational and economic future of their children, but a community of families can change the future of our children" (40).

James Coleman has also proclaimed the benefits of community for two categories of disadvantaged children – those from homes that lack financial resources and those from homes that lack sufficient parental guidance. Coleman suggests that many families and communities are deficient in social capital. "What I mean by social capital in the raising of children is the norms, the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child's growing up. Social capital exists within the family, but also outside the family, in the community" (36).

Some parents fail to provide their children with affection, guidance, habit-formation, and a consistent and constructive value system because the parents themselves are psychologically stressed and preoccupied with the overwhelming demands of the world around them. Some other parents fail to provide their children with these resources because the parents have withdrawn from the demands of childrearing in order to pursue the satisfactions of their careers and personal interests. In both cases, children are disadvantaged.

The community could provide a second level of support for these disadvantaged children, but in today's fragmented and stratified society, true community is rare. "Beyond the family, social capital in the community exists in the interest, even the intrusiveness, of one adult in the activities of someone else's child. Sometimes that interest takes the form of enforcing norms imposed by parents or by the community; sometimes it takes the form of lending a sympathetic ear to problems not discussable with parents, sometimes volunteer youth group leadership or participation in other youth-related activities" (Coleman 36). When such qualities of community do not exist outside the school, children suffer in their personal development and in their academic achievement. Through the school's initiative, a school community can be created in order to supply the social capital so many young people are now denied.

The school can create a community of families and school personnel, bound together not only by attachment to a common institution but by adherence to explicit educational values.

Precepts of the School Community

The concept of the school community is based on the following precepts:

- **Precept:** Children learn more, and more children remain in school to learn, when a sense of community prevails among the families and school personnel who constitute the school.

- **Precept:** Community is based on commonly-held values, and a school community should be based on educational values – its members' educational aims for all their children.

- **Precept:** The school can create a community of families and school personnel, bound together not only by attachment to a common institution but by adherence to explicit educational values.

- **Precept:** The weaving of the explicit values of the school community into the practices of the school should be:

  - guided by a school council consisting of the principal, teachers, and parents;
  - directed through the leadership of the principal;
  - nurtured through the education of parents and teachers, school-home communication, common experience, and association.

- **Precept:** The principal should be an expert at building a school community and should provide the leadership essential to the process.

- **Precept:** A school community is created when the school council adopts educational values, transforms these values into goals, and establishes expectations for school community members.

- **Precept:** A school community evolves as it adopts new values, modifies old values, and makes the practices of families and school personnel congruent with the values of the school community.

- **Precept:** Carefully designed programs of education for school personnel and parent education:

  - Define roles of principals, teachers, school staff, parents, and students in the school community;
  - Channel family participation toward academic ends;
  - Enhance the constructive sense of school community.

A community is not a geographic concept. A city is a community only if its inhabitants share values and pursue common ends; the shared values and goals form the community, not the political boundaries of the city.

- **Precept:** School-home communication that is attentive to the explicit values of the school community strengthens the sense of community and enhances the ability of school community members to perform their distinct and interrelated roles in pursuit of their common aims.

- **Precept:** Educational experiences shared by all children in the school enhance community.

- **Precept:** Association of school community members that cuts across age and generational lines enhances community.

- **Precept:** The school community provides a safety net of support for the children of negligent and disadvantaged parents.

The School Community: Summary

The family and the school are concrete institutions, ones that can be pointed to and studied in particular as well as in the aggregate. The community is an abstraction. If a community is, as John Dewey said, a group of like-minded people who are "cognizant of the[ir] common end and all interested in it so that they regulate their specific activity in view of it" (*Democracy and Education* 5), then community is bound together by common values that are understood and communicated.

A community is not a geographic concept. A city is a community only if its inhabitants share values and pursue common ends; the shared values and goals form the community, not the political boundaries of the city. A school is a community if those who comprise it share values and goals and are in communication with one another. This is not usually the case.

Community is a creature of values. Values are qualities that people consider worthwhile and desirable. When people act in accordance with their values, the

values become goals. When a group of people agree on certain values, and live in accordance with these values, and are in communication with one another, they form a community. The school community is premised on values. When the constituents of a school fail to consider their common values, they miss the opportunity to form a community. A school community has much to offer its members. Students are motivated by its compelling motifs, parents are made full partners in their children's education, teachers find support for and meaning in their work, and administrators are buoyed by a consensus surrounding the objects of their direction. But a school community does not take shape by happenstance. The school community is based on values. These values must be expressed. They must be transformed into goals through the endeavor of community members. The school is composed of its personnel, students, and families of students. These people are drawn into a relationship by virtue of their membership in the school. They create a school community when they:

- adopt a core of educational values,
- transform their values into goals by acting on them, and
- establish associations with one another to enhance their abilities to achieve their goals.

The school community asks its members to assist their children and students in achieving the goals of the school community. These goals are extensions of educational values rather than of religious, political, or social values.

Schools have always been based on values. The early American schools were based on religious/moral values. The nineteenth-century common school was based on democratic and nationalistic values. The modern public school is based on the values of social reform and social justice. Like its predecessors, the school community is based on values, but unlike its predecessors, its values are determined by its members and are related to the education of that particular school's students.

Early American schools were asked to advance the Christian faith and provide the community with moral citizens. The common schools were asked to overcome class divisions and provide the democracy with politically astute citizens. The modern schools are asked to redress social injustices and change society in the process. The school community asks its members to assist their children and students in achieving the goals of the school community. These goals are extensions of educational values rather than of religious, political, or social values. Educational values arise from the school community's hopes and desires for its own children rather than from externally determined benefits to broader society.

Building the School Community

A school community is created and sustained through conscious intent, hard work, cooperation, and good management. Leadership is vested in the position of the principal, but responsibility is shared by teachers, staff, parents, and students. A model for building a school community is outlined below. This model includes six components:

REPRESENTATION

VALUE BASE

EDUCATION

COMMUNICATION

COMMON EXPERIENCE

ASSOCIATION

The school council may have no legal authority, but it performs a function that otherwise is left unattended: the school council builds the school community.

Representation: The School Council

Franklin School assembled its parents, teachers, and administrators in the gymnasium to forge community values and expectations. Most schools could not bring all of their constituents together at one time and certainly could not conduct the business of the school community in this manner on a regular basis. Instead, a representative body can do the work of the whole. A school council can initiate and guide the school community.

The school council is not the school board. Unlike the school board, the school council has only the authority voluntarily granted it by the people it represents. The school council may have no legal authority, but it performs a function that otherwise is left unattended: the school council builds the school community. It keeps everyone's eyes on the values they share. It crystalizes the values and shapes them into goals. It mobilizes the school community to achieve its goals.

The school council consists of the principal, teacher representatives, and parent representatives. The number of parents on the council should exceed the number of all other members. In other words, the parents should comprise at least a majority of the council membership. If, for example, the school council includes the principal and two teachers, at least f parents should be included.

A school community, like any community, rests on the shared values of its constituents. The job of the school council is to articulate the values of the school community, to hold these values before the school community as Moses held his tablets – prominently and authoritatively. The school council's tasks in building the school community are to:

Charged with the central task of building the school community, the school council becomes a clearinghouse for creative approaches to the enhancement of community.

- establish the school community's value base by adopting school community values, goals, and expectations,
- communicate the community values, goals, and expectations to school community members,
- assist the principal in educating teachers and parents to help them meet community expectations,
- modify the values and their corresponding goals and expectations over time.

Charged with the central task of building the school community, the school council becomes a clearinghouse for creative approaches to the enhancement of community. The school council solicits suggestions from parents and teachers and students. The school council assists the principal in planning activities that promote community.

Value Base

School Community Values

A school community is based on the educational values of its members. A school community value is a learned quality (ability or characteristic) that school community members believe is fundamentally desirable for all students. To be included as a school community value, an ability or characteristic must be:

- considered valuable by most, if not all, school community members,
- attainable by all students,

- achieved through learning, including learning at home as well as learning at school,
- applicable to all areas of the school program rather than to specific subject areas, and
- achieved through the combined efforts of the students, parents, and teachers.

School community values represent the hot core of hope that every parent harbors for her child and every teacher for her student. Identifying the educational values of the school community is a process of seeking common denominators learned qualities that all parents and teachers consider valuable for all students. Articulating values is a matter of putting first things first – establishing priorities. For this reason, the list of community values should be kept short. All valued outcomes of learning should not be included, only those few most highly and universally valued outcomes.

Identifying the educational values of the school community is process of seeking comm denominators – learned qualitie that all parents and teachers consider valuable for all students.

The parents and teachers at Franklin Elementary School, our model for a school community, arrived at a concise list of community values – studying, reading, and decency. These values meet the criteria outlined above.

School Community Goals

Community values affirm what is important to the school community – what its members see as worthwhile. When these values are stated as goals for all students, school community members are given concrete objectives toward which their efforts become directed. An example of a school community goal would be: "Because the Franklin School Community values studying, it is the goal of the Frankiin School Community that all students learn to study and become disciplined, skilled, and self-directed students."

School Community Expectations

For the school community to be viable, its values must be more than verbiage. Its goals must be achieved through concerted effort. In Dewey's words, teachers, parents, and students must "order their lives" by their common values. The school council helps teachers, parents, and students order their lives by the school community's values by developing expectations – guidelines of each constituent's role in achieving the school community's goals. School community expectations are the school community's expectations of itself.

Education for Teachers and Parents

By stating its goals for its students and listing its expectations for parents, teachers, and students, the school council helps the school community live in accordance with their values. The lists of expectations provide concrete, behavioral means for pursuing the educational goals of the school community; they become guidelines for teachers, parents, and students. But simply handing people lists of expectations is not the best way to garner their cooperation. Teachers and parents need explanation and support. The school council assists the principal in educating teachers and parents about the school community's expectations.

But simply handing people lists of expectations is not the best way to garner their cooperation. Teachers and parents need explanation and support.

Teachers begin each school year with a workshop at which the principal, with the assistance of the school council, explains the school community expectations, and the teachers plan their instructional strategies accordingly. At subsequent meetings and workshops, teachers share experiences and suggestions for the most effective expression of the community values.

Parents may be educated about the school community expectations through short courses taught by previously trained parents. These courses focus on the practical implementation of the expectations, suggesting specific tasks for the parents to carry out with their families between sessions of the course. Parents can then discuss their progress and offer suggestions to one another.

Workshops including teachers and parents are useful in ironing out the overlapping areas of responsibility and gaining a better understanding of everyone's role in the school community.

Special committees of parents and teachers can develop topics and curricula for parent and teacher education programs. It is important that the education programs maintain a sharp focus on school community values, goals, and expectations.

Communication Between School and Home

Good school-home communication builds the spirit and substance of community. A school newsletter may include suggestions to parents and reports on special class projects that are related to the school community's values. The agenda for parent-teacher conferences can include a discussion of the child's progress toward the school community's goals, and of the progress of teachers, parents, and students in meeting the expectations of the school community. Report cards can include ratings of the child's progress in meeting the expectations.

Because parents are full partners in the school community's pursuit of its goals, school-home communication should be a two-way street. Parents may include their stories in the school newsletter, telling of their home's efforts in meeting the expectations of the school community. At parent-teacher conferences, parents can describe, from their perspective, their child's progress in meeting the school community's expectations. Report cards might even include a scale for parents to rate their children on the expectations.

School-home communication can also include happy-grams from teachers to parents to report specific incidences of a child's exemplary demonstration of the community values and to congratulate parents for their good work. Because teachers need and deserve to feel the appreciation of the families they serve, happy-grams from home to school are also a great idea. A form for home-to-school happy-grams can be included in the school newsletter with an explanation of their use.

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Common Experience

The school experience is largely one of fragmentation and stratification, division and separation. School is a place where children are separated from the adults and infants who inhabit their larger world. At school, children are further separated by age – five year olds are sent to kindergarten, six year olds to first grade, and so forth. Bright students receive enhancement for the gifted. Dull students receive remediation. Handicapped students are sorted in another direction. Students are slotted into academic tracks even with little research evidence that children learn more when tracked. In high school, some students go to wood shop and others to algebra. Schools constantly divide and separate.

While schools are characteristically bent on sorting and dividing, a community is built by uniting. In building a school community, the principal and school council should constantly look for programs and policies that unite students. Shared experiences contribute to community.

Extracurricular activities, particularly interscholastic competition, contribute to community because of their integrative power (Coleman and Hoffer 217). At a high school basketball game, students shed their differences and unite in common cause. The players, the cheerleaders, the pompom squad, the pep band, and the fans in the bleachers come together at this time and place to celebrate their common association with their school. As they rise to sing their school fight song, their differences dissolve. At this moment, there are no freshmen, no seniors. There are no honor students and no remedial students. Boys and girls, black and white, vocational and college prep, rich and poor – all students stand together.

Could the uplifting, unifying powers of interscholastic competition be used to enhance the values of the school? In addition to athletic competition, schools should encourage interscholastic competition in academically related areas: debate, math teams, scholastic bowls, music contests, speech teams, etc. People long for common experiences. Interscholastic competition arouses passions as do few other school experiences.

Other events that draw the boundaries of membership in the school also tap latent reservoirs of pride and enthusiasm. Any teacher will attest to the enthusiasm that fills the hallways on theme days. Whether it is dress-up day or school-spirit day or backwards day, children revel in the sheer fun of an activity that involves them all. Too few school experiences unite rather than divide students. More of these experiences are needed, and more of them should be tied to the values of the school community. Maybe "decency day" is a bit prosaic, but creative minds could surely put a playful spin on "courtesy day" and relish in the results. "Homework day" may present greater challenges, but schools abound in ingenuity, and finding ways to generate as much enthusiasm about homework as youngsters exude for school-colors day would itself be a task worthy of the school community's best minds.

The purpose of common experience is to unite children in their pursuit of the school community's goals. Common purpose may be achieved through school policies and everyday practices as much as through special events.

The concept of common experiences is more than a schedule full of pep rallies and theme days. In fact, the purpose of common experience is to unite children in their pursuit of the school community's goals. Common purpose may be achieved through school policies and everyday practices as much as through special events. A school homework policy which states boldly that "this school believes in the benefits of regular homework and expects that teachers assign homework daily, that students complete their homework, and that parents monitor their children's completion of homework assignments" brings everyone under the same roof. The simple policy assertion that reading is essential and everyone in this school reads every day makes a poignant statement about what it means to be a member of this school community. When a child can say, "I go to a school where everyone . . .," that child has sensed something of community no matter how he finishes the sentence.

Association: Intragenerational and Intergenerational

Just as schools divide and separate their students, they also segregate children from the rest of society. The world includes infants, but the school does not. The world includes young adults and senior citizens, but the school does not. The fabric of a true community is woven with strands of each generation, and the school community is strengthened by age integration. The place to start in promoting broader associations of age groups is within the school itself – with in-

tragenerational association. Imagine the power of an eighth grade student reading to a class of fourth graders. The eighth grader first read *Alice in Wonderland* when she was in fourth grade. Now she returns – a model to her younger colleagues – to tell of the book's meaning to her and to show by her example the joy and importance of reading.

Consider the poignancy of a high school senior telling a class of eighth graders how important good study habits are to success in high school. Think of the mutual benefit derived from a seventh grader teaching a kindergartener to tie his shoes. Children find heroes in their immediate surroundings. They may be fascinated by T.V. stars and professional athletes, but their everyday lives are more influenced by older children who they perceive as "cool." And older children generally rise to the occasion, showing their best sides when put in a position to help those younger than themselves.

In order for families, teachers, and school staff to function as a community, they must associate. They must have opportunities to communicate. When their association focuses on the school community's values, the community is particularly well served.

School activities that involve entire families are intergenerational and contribute to community. In order for families, teachers, and school staff to function as a community, they must associate. They must have opportunities to communicate. When their association focuses on the school community's values, the community is particularly well served.

There was a time when most mothers did not work outside the home and were available to assist the school with daytime activities. Those days are gone. Because most parents work during the school day, their involvement with the school is largely confined to the evenings and is, therefore, limited in frequency. Two age groups, however, are available to schools during school hours and can fill the intergenerational void left by working parents. College students and senior citizens can often be involved in programs that bring them into the schools to interact with children. They may read to children, tutor them, talk with them. Many schools use college interns and volunteers. Many schools have successful "grandparents" programs. How could college students and senior citizens be involved in projects that promote community values? Answering that question will add a stout wall to the edifice of the school community.

No association is more vital than the association of family members among themselves. Parents and their children often live in relative isolation from one another; their interactions are superficial and sporadic. This is a symptom of our times. But children need more, and the school community is enhanced when its member families achieve substantial and constructive interaction. A good parent education program will encourage communication and interaction among family members. The best way to involve parents in promoting the values of the school community is to increase their interaction with their own children.

Building the School Community: Summary

The school community is constructed on a foundation of educational values. These values are articulated by a school council which serves the primary purpose of building the school community and promoting its values. The values of the school community become its goals when parents, teachers, and students direct their efforts toward a realization of the values they hold. To aid in achieving the goals of the school community, the school council establishes expectations for students, teachers, and parents. These are the school community's expectations of itself—the roles to be played by each of its member.

From its foundation of values, the school community is erected through communication, education, common experience, and association.

From its foundation of values, the school community is erected through communication, education, common experience, and association. Communication between the home and the school keeps everyone's attention on the values of the school community and reports progress made toward the school community's goals. Education of parents and teachers helps them meet the expectations of the school community more effectively. Common experiences define the boundaries of community and contribute to members' sense of belonging. Associations of school community members that cut across age and generational lines strengthen the fabric of the community. Inclusion of college students and senior citizens in the school community helps compensate for the absence of parents during the school day. Interaction within the family, particularly in activities and discussions that center on school community values, is the school community's most powerful form of parent involvement.

Why Studying, Reading, and Decency?

If community values are intended to reflect the ideas and beliefs of the school community, then each school community should arrive at its own short list of values. Why then has so much been made of studying, reading and decency? Imposing these values on a school community is contrary to the very theme of this report – that a school community rests on the self-determined values of its members. This is true. But it is also true that studying, reading, and decency make great examples of school community values. They fit the criteria for a school community value so well.

A school council would not go too far astray by including studying, reading, and decency on a list of, perhaps, four community values.

In fact, a school council would not go too far astray by including studying, reading, and decency on a list of, perhaps, four community values. The idiosyncracies of the school community will be revealed in the additional value and in the expectations the school council develops for all four values. Keeping this in mind, the case is presented for studying, reading, and decency.

Studying

"Learning to learn" is a clever way of saying that children are taught to study. Parents and teachers want children to become independent, efficient, self-motivated learners. They want children to find pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge. They hope that children will value the act of studying for the rewards it brings to their lives.

Studying is a channeled, intentional, self-directed form of learning. It is a habit premised on a value. The habit of studying, like all habits, is acquired over time through a combination of necessity, skill, and regular reinforcement. It is rooted in the desire to learn and the personal belief that learning improves one's life. Because children spend more time at home than in school and because the family is the most powerful context for the formation of habits and values, parents are key players in establishing a child's study habits and desire to study.

A school administrator in Chicago tells how his father instilled the value of studying in his children. The father was unschooled and illiterate, but he knew the importance of learning. Each evening, after dinner dishes were cleared away, the father placed a large, blue dictionary at the center of the kitchen table and watched his children do their homework. The ritual act of placing on the table the dictionary, a book the father could not himself read, expressed the father's value for learning. The father's quiet presence while his children completed assignments he could not himself decipher showed his belief in the significance of their effort. This father raised study to the level of an article of family faith. His children all graduated from college.

When studying becomes a routine part of family life, a habit of the home that stems from the family's value of learning, the framework for independent learning and for the completion of homework assignments is created.

When studying becomes a routine part of family life, a habit of the home that stems from the family's value of learning, the framework for independent learning and for the completion of homework assignments is created. The discipline for learning is given root.

Parents need to know what is expected of them in developing the child's study habits. Parent education clarifies the parental role and provides support and assistance for parents. A workable expectation is for children to spend a minimum of 10 minutes per grade level per day, five days per week, studying at home. This means that the parents expect their children to spend at least this amount of time studying at home, whether or not they have specific homework assignments to complete. The value of study, the expectation that study is a routine part of life, and the discipline for regular study are established and reinforced by the family. The study habit is built at home.

In addition to expectations of the amount of time to be spent studying at home, parents will benefit from suggestions for appropriate places to study and an explanation of the parent's role in the child's study. Should children study alone in their rooms, at the kitchen table, or on the living room floor? Should parents ignore children during study time, assist them with their homework, or monitor their study behavior? Is it the parent's responsibility to teach subject matter to their children? What if the parents can't? What exactly does the school community expect of parents in helping their children achieve the school community's goal of good study habits? If parents are to provide consistent guidance for their children, they need specific guidelines explaining the school community's expectations of them and of their children.

If study habits are best nurtured in the home, what is the role of the teacher? Teachers contribute to the formation of study habits by requiring children to study independently, by assigning homework regularly, and by teaching students how to study effectively. Study skills are best acquired within the context of the regular curriculum as means for mastering subject matter. In other words, teachers can help students acquire skills and habits of study by showing them how

to approach specific subject matter, how to organize material, and how to master it.

Listening for significant information in class, taking well-organized notes, using library resources, preparing study cards to master content, and anticipating a teacher's questions on a test are sometimes called "study skills." Schools are tempted to teach study skills in isolation of subject content and as a separate component of the curriculum. This approach is not nearly as effective as providing teachers with in-service training which enables them to teach their subjects in ways that develop skills and habits of study.

In addition to teaching the student to study within the context of specific subject matter, the teacher molds independent study habits through homework. Homework should be assigned regularly in order to build a consistent habit of study. Some kinds of homework are more effective than others. Homework is most effective when it counts as a significant part of a child's grade, is returned to the child, and includes comments from the teacher.

Education programs for teachers will equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach children to study (within the context of their subject matter) and will help them use homework effectively.

The school community should expect a uniform approach to homework among its teachers. If parents are asked to introduce the idea of studying at home with kindergarten students and then gradually escalate the amount of time for studying at home with each year in school, teachers should assign homework accordingly. Too often, a school has no policy on homework or, if it does, fails to monitor teachers' adherence to the policy. One teacher assigns homework, but the next teacher does not. Homework may be graded in one class but not in the next. Such erratic practices do little to encourage the habit of study.

Education programs for teachers will equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach children to study (within the context of their subject matter) and will help them use homework effectively. Parent education programs will equip parents with the knowledge and skills for developing good study habits and instilling in children the value of learning and disciplined study.

Herbert Walberg proclaims the significance of homework to academic learning. "The 15 empirical studies of homework that have been conducted since 1900 showed that the assignment and grading of work done at home produces an effect on achievement that is three times as large as family socioeconomic status (as indexed by parental income, education, and occupation). Homework produces uniformly positive effects on the factual, conceptual, critical, and attitudinal aspects of learning" (399).

Researchers have found that homework has compensatory effects (Keith); students of lower ability can achieve grades equal to those of higher ability students

through increased study at home. Homework has also been shown to be a significant factor in explaining differences in achievement test scores (Page and Keith).

In addition to its positive effect on academic achievement, homework

- establishes the habit of studying in the home;
- prepares the student for the independent learning required in high school, college, and beyond;
- can be a focal point of constructive family interaction;
- allows the parents to see what the student is learning in school,
- competes with television-watching rather than with constructive activities in most homes;
- extends formal learning beyond the school day,
- enables the student to reflect on material and become more intimately familiar with it than is often allowed in a busy, sometimes distracting school setting; and
- provides the teacher with a frequent check on the student's progress.

Daily homework assignments have been found superior to less frequent assignments and traditional homework assignments more effective than non-traditional assignments.

Research is helpful in establishing expectations for teachers in the effective use of homework. A study of the effectiveness of homework in mathematics (Austin), for example, concluded the following.

- Required homework is more effective than voluntary homework.
- Having no homework assigned at one grade level adversely affects performance at subsequent grade levels.
- Homework is most effective when returned promptly by the teacher with comments and a grade.

Other studies (Elawar and Corno; Page; Paschel, et al.) attest to the importance of the teacher grading and placing written comments on homework. Daily homework assignments have been found superior to less frequent assignments and traditional homework assignments more effective than non-traditional assignments (Paschel).

The studies cited above give weighty evidence for the benefits of homework and provide helpful information for teachers about the relative effectiveness of various homework procedures. Homework is most effective when it is:

- frequent,
- directly related to in-class work;
- used to master rather than introduce new material;
- graded and included as a significant part of the report card grade, and
- returned to the student soon after it is collected, and marked with comments particular to the student

Good readers typically come from homes where parents read, people talk about their reading, parents read to their children, and children read to their parents.

With this background of research on homework, the school community can establish expectations for teachers, parents, and students to use homework in ways that are consistent with and supportive of the educational value of studying. Using homework effectively, teaching children how to study within the context of subject matter, and making independent study an important mode of learning promotes the value of studying. So does a steady message from parents that life is enhanced by self-directed learning.

Reading

The 1985 report of the Commission on Reading, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, makes it clear that reading is not merely a subject taught in the primary grades; it is an acquired skill, habit, and attitude that is developed by the home as well as the school. "Reading begins in the home," the report states (21). Parents provide the foundation for learning to read. The parent-child relationship is key to the child's sustained efforts to master the skill of reading and is critical to the child's very desire to read. Good readers typically come from homes where parents read, people talk about their reading, parents read to their children, and children read to their parents.

The parental role does not end when the child acquires the basic skills of reading. The child's interest in reading is fed by continued discussion of what family members read. The family practice of finding a quiet time in the home for family members to read makes reading a routine part of family life. Parental encouragement for research—checking the dictionary, exploring a topic in the encyclopedia, taking a trip to the library—teaches children the utility of reading. Sharing the experience of reading shows children the joy of reading.

School experiences which are shared by students, teachers, and parents are typically extracurricular and nonacademic. A shared reading program, however, can provide a base of common learning for a school community. In a shared reading program, one or two books are selected for each grade level, kindergarten through senior year. Each year, a child is issued paperback copies of the books selected for that grade level. The books are integrated into the curriculum, provide themes for school activities, and become a basis for family discussion.

Decency requires a basic honesty and expresses itself in genuine courtesy.

In the early grades, teachers and parents read the books from the shared reading list to the children. Later, children read to their parents and teachers. Parents are asked to read the same books as their children and to talk about the books with their children. Parent organizations sponsor discussion groups including parents and their children to talk about their books. Community members, particularly senior citizens, are invited to school to read from the chosen books and to discuss them with children. The school may organize visits to nursing homes and retirement centers for children to read their books to the elderly. Older children may read to younger children. The books are not only a part of language arts and English classes, but become points of reference and specific assignment for all disciplines. Education of teachers and parents is necessary. The reading list is seldom changed so that, over time, the books become a common base of reading experience for the entire school community.

The school council can establish a special committee of parents, teachers, and the librarian to develop a reading list for a shared reading program and to help teachers and parents integrate these readings into the school's curriculum and the family's activities.

Decency

Theodore Sizer makes the case for decency as the all-encompassing quality of character that people in a school community should exhibit and encourage. Decency, he says, "comprises fairness, generosity, and tolerance" (121). Decency requires a basic honesty and expresses itself in genuine courtesy. Decency is a simply-stated aim of a school community, a value upon which the school community can be based.

Decency, like studying and reading, rests on specific skills and habits that are consistently reinforced. Decency, in other words, is learned behavior, not an innate quality of goodness.

James P. Comer, the Yale psychiatrist who has succeeded in developing a model for obtaining academic success in difficult school situations, explains the cycle of failure that confronts a child who enters school with learned behavior that is not fitting in a school environment. In his book, *Maggie's American Dream*, Comer describes children from underprivileged families who arrive at school with the habits of the housing project. They are typically labeled as incorrigible. Teachers find it difficult to empathize with them. They are dealt with as discipline problems. What they lack, says Comer, is instruction and guidance in how to adapt to the values of a school setting.

Comer's prescription for the problem of the child who does not behave "decently" in school includes:

- involvement of parents to reduce their antipathy for and feeling of intimidation by representatives of the school culture – teachers and school staff;
- in-service training of teachers to help them understand the children they serve and to provide them with instructional strategies for teaching children proper school behavior;
- a team-approach to dealing with serious behavior problems, involving the school's support staff; and
- consistent expectation of "decent" behavior.

In other words, Comer calls for a community approach to the problem. His remedies are educational. The basic assumption is that parents, teachers, and support staff working together with consistent expectations and values can establish a school climate of decency.

Comer tells of a new student who had just transferred to one of the schools in his program. "Someone stepped on the foot of [the] transfer student and his dukes went up. Another youngster said, 'Hey man, we don't do that in this school.' He looked at the expressions of the faces around him and read, 'We don't fight,' and he dropped his dukes" (219). Clearly, the values of the school community were molding the behavior of its students. The culture of the school was one of decency, and the behavioral implications were obvious to the students.

Character, behavior, classroom management, discipline – all these buzz words of education refer to the essential human relationships among teachers and students that provide the foundation of order and civility conducive to learning. Children and their teachers spend their days together, intimately engaged in the work of the school. Like any intimate group situation, conflicts and disagreements and hurt feelings and emotional lapses occasionally bubble up from the calm surface

Character, behavior, classroom management, discipline – all these buzz words of education refer to the essential human relationships among teachers and students that provide the foundation of order and civility conducive to learning.

of the classroom. But also like any productive and nurturing group situation, the engulfing climate must be one of predictable behavior, cooperation, respect, caring, and common courtesy. Teachers deserve the attention of their students not only because they are teachers, but because all human beings deserve attention when they rightfully request it. Students deserve the consideration of each other. Students deserve the attention and consideration and fair treatment of their teachers. All of this is true not only because the rules of order in the school institution require it, but because civil human intercourse demands it. Most rules of classroom behavior can be held to the simple test of decency. It is only decent that we listen when someone else speaks. It is only decent that we not distract others from learning. It is only decent that a teacher teach a child the behavior that will enable him or her to survive and, indeed, thrive in the school culture.

Like any productive and nurturing group situation, the engulfing climate must be one of predictable behavior, cooperation, respect, caring, and common courtesy.

Formalistic teaching of specific behaviors of conventional courtesy may seem old-fashioned, but conventional courtesies are the gears of social interaction. They move social relationships forward, smoothly and predictably. When a young person learns to introduce himself, shake hands, pay compliments, say "thanks," and excuse himself when he passes between two people in conversation, he learns the rudiments of human relationships. This knowledge enables him to function well in a variety of social settings and contributes to his self-confidence and self-assurance. Courteous behavior, like any behavior, is learned. To be learned, this behavior must be taught and practiced. The school and the home share in the responsibility to practice, teach, reinforce, and expect courteous behavior.

Many parents would be shocked to see the behavior of their children in a school cafeteria. Gone are the days when each teacher sat with her classroom at the lunch table and monitored table manners as a good parent would do at home. More typically, children eat en masse, under the supervision of a wandering lunchroom supervisor who responds only to the grossest trespasses on civility. Like a prison guard, the supervisor may flick off the lights to warn her charges that their din has exceeded reasonable bounds or that their food play is verging on a verboten food fight.

The battle between civilization and barbarism is waged, and largely lost, in the school cafeteria. In a tiny elementary school in a little farm town in northern Illinois, a courageous lunchroom supervisor has drawn the line between civilization and barbarism and has dared students to cross it. Scratched in hand-written letters on a piece of cardboard, displayed on a wall in the cafeteria is a sign that reads:

RULES

1. Don't throw food.
2. Don't talk dirty.
3. Don't stick your middle finger up.

With three simple rules, this brave cook has thwarted the advances of the Huns. We have come a long way from not speaking with our mouths full.

Other Educational Values

Studying, reading, and decency are not the only values a school community might share. Diligence is a worthy value for a school community. So is writing. So is critical thinking. So creativity and efficacy. Studying, reading, and decency are basic building-blocks of a school community, but each school community has its own ideas of value, its own conception of the ideal form of student accomplishment.

Studying, reading, and decency are basic building-blocks of a school community, but each school community has its own ideas of value, its own conception of the ideal form of student accomplishment.

Studying, reading, and decency are suggested here because of their universal acceptability. They would provide any school with solid cornerstones for constructing their community. By its very nature, however, a school community differentiates itself from other school communities. Its values may differ, and, certainly, its expectations will differ. Building a school community is a creative act. The more a school community reflects the idiosyncratic characteristics of its constituents, the stronger it will be.

Magnet schools define their specialness by emphasizing particular subject areas or by accepting particular types of students. A magnet school may, for example, concentrate on the fine arts or on science. It may accept only students who score high on achievement tests. The school community defines its specialness through its values. Its values transcend subject areas and apply to all students. Like a magnet school, a school community distinguishes itself by clearly stating its special characteristics; in doing so, it differentiates itself from other schools.

The Challenge to Educators and Parents

Assuming that the reader is an educator or a parent or both, it seems urgent that the concluding chapter convince the reader to help build a school community. First, it must be established that building a school community is worth the bother. Second, a practical builder's guide must be provided. And third, the reader must be prepared to withstand and overcome the inevitable resistance he or she will encounter.

Why Bother to Build a School Community?

Building a school community *is* a bother. Much can be said for going with the flow of inertia, and that flow is certainly not going in the way of community. Patterns of schooling are moving toward larger schools and more insulation of families, administrators, and teachers from one another. Patterns of society are moving toward greater family mobility and less association of families whose children attend the same school. Discussions of educational values may take place in graduate schools of education, and sometimes in teachers' lounges, but almost never with parents.

The existing arrangement between parents and educators reflects the tenor of the times. Many parents expect more and more of schools as they themselves provide less of the time and attention their children need. Teachers are increasingly obsessed with the disparity they see between the expectations placed on them and the rewards they receive. Teachers bargain with their schools and lobby their state legislatures to draw the line on what they are willing to do for their level of compensation. Thus, parents expect more from schools, and teachers expect less of themselves. The gap left by retreating commitments of time and attention by parents on one side and teachers on the other side leaves children stranded in the middle. A school community helps rescue these children. For this reason, building a school community is worth the bother. And stating the problem in this manner may infuriate every reader who is a parent, an educator, or both. But it must be said.

The gap left by retreating commitments of time and attention by parents on one side and teachers on the other side leaves children stranded in the middle. A school community helps rescue these children.

Children are the ultimate beneficiaries of a school community. Their parents and their teachers are drawn together, face to face, to consider what is best for the children and what is expected of every party in achieving what is best. With clear expectations comes certain accountability. With common values comes common purpose. With mutual striving comes mutual support. As the gap between the childrearing of the home and the child-teaching of the school is narrowed, fewer children are left stranded in the middle; for those children who do remain in the gap, more parents and teachers are ready and prepared to rescue them. The safety net of the school community catches those children whose parents or teachers fail to rise to the expectations they have set for themselves.

With clear expectations comes certain accountability. With common values comes common purpose. With mutual striving comes mutual support.

There are other good reasons to build school communities. Greater involvement of parents increases public support for education. The strong associations of the school community, including those that bring senior citizens and college students into the school community, weld alliances with the broader public – the public that approves school tax referenda and influences legislators.

Why bother to build a school community? Because children will be better served, education will be cast in a more favorable public light, and parents and teachers will experience the gratification of common endeavor.

Eleven Steps to a School Community

The following steps will lead a school to community. Each step can be embellished and enhanced through the abundant creativity and insight that every school's parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and students possess.

Representation

Step #1: Establish a school council consisting of the principal, four parents, and two teachers.

Step #2: Develop a constitution for the school community (see Franklin School example in Addendum)

Value Base

Step #3: Adopt four school community values.

Step #4: Restate the values as goals for all students.

Step #5: Develop school community expectations for teachers, parents, and students.

Communication

Step #6: Prepare the first School Community Report. (See Franklin School example in Addendum.)

Step #7: Integrate values and expectations into two-way, school-home communication.
Examples. newsletter, parent-teacher conferences, report cards, happy-grams from teachers to parents, happy-grams from parents to teachers (include form and concept in newsletter)

Integrate values and expectations into two-way, school-home communication.

Education

Step #8: Offer education program for teachers:

- Workshop before school to introduce expectations
- Meetings during school year to discuss, share suggestions regarding expectations

Step #9: Offer education program for parents; a short course for each school community value to explain expectations.

Common Experience

Step #10: Plan a common experience (program, curricular component, event, activity, or policy) for each value.

Association

Step #11: Plan an association (program, curricular component, activity, or event) related to each value. Make one association intragenerational, one involving families and school personnel, and one involving college students and/or senior citizens.

Categorizing people is a risky business; people do not fit neatly into the slots of theoretical paradigms.

Golden Rules for Building a School Community

- Distinguish your school from other schools.
- Unite the constituencies of your school.
- Focus on your values.

Converting Parents to Type IV

Categorizing people is a risky business; people do not fit neatly into the slots of theoretical paradigms. With this caveat in mind, the following generalizations about parental situations can prove helpful in building a school community. The goal is to move parents from Types I, II, and III into Type IV. Type IV represents the Ready, Willing, and Able school community member.

	Type I Ready but Alienated	**Type II** Willing but Frustrated	**Type III** Able but Disengaged
Characteristics	Struggling with personal survival, limited parenting skills	Child-centered, frustrated by societal trends	Absorbed by career and/or personal interests, little time with children
View of School	Intimidating, often bearer of bad news, but relieves of children	Inadequately attentive to child, remote from family	Hired professionals entrusted with education/childrearing
Key to Involvement	Positive personal experiences with school	Positive personal experiences with other parents	Positive personal experiences with children
Strategies for involvement	Reach them outside the school, bring them in; meet social needs in school	Train and provide meaningful leadership role	Structure their interaction with children
Benefits Derived from School community	Acquire skills of parenting, personal growth, satisfaction	Develop leadership abilities, become part of social environment	Reawakened regard for family; behavior made consistent with values
Contributions to School Community When Type IV Is Achieved	Own children better guided, relieving school	Leaders for parents; surrogate parents for neglected children	Professional, social contacts; financial resources; professional skills, competence; better guidance for own children, relieving school

Roadblocks

The path to school community will be littered with obstacles, but the journey is worth the travail. Community is not a destination, but a mode of travel. Anticipate the obstacles, perceive them as challenges, and don't be deterred.

If you establish studying as a value of the school community and work hard to develop a course for parents, you can expect some parent to say, "My sixth grade son does not study at home. He does not want to study at home, and I am not going to make him study at home. If the school wants him to study at home, the school should offer him a course on studying, not me."

The path to school community will be littered with obstacles, but the journey is worth the travail. Community is not a destination, but a mode of travel. Anticipate the obstacles, perceive them as challenges, and don't be deterred.

If you assemble a school council and take great pains to draw parents into the process, you can expect at least one teacher to say, "Parents are what is wrong with children today. Involving them in the school will only make matters worse. Teachers spend too much of their time trying to compensate for the errors of the home already. We have enough trouble educating children without taking on the additional responsibility of educating their parents."

If you excitedly run to your principal, eager to launch a school community, you may hear, "If parents think they can run the school, fine; let them try. But I'll guarantee you, they will fail. They have no understanding of what school is all about. They have no education or experience in school matters. And many of them are doing a poor job with their own families. I'm tired of the school being blamed for problems that originate at home."

Just remember that each of these reactions is a sign of frustration with the system as it now exists. Your job is to change the system. Look behind the negative reaction and consider the perspective of the person who is reacting. Remember that some parents have given up on parenting; suddenly accepting new parental responsibilities and reasserting their parental authority at home is a fearsome prospect. Remind them that they are not alone in their fear and frustration. The support of the school community and the camaraderie of other parents are just what they need.

Remember that teachers are accustomed to autonomy; they are the masters of their classrooms, and they are resistant to uniform policies that limit their independence. All teachers will not jump for joy at the prospect of school community expectations. They will not necessarily think it is a great idea to let parents help determine expectations for teachers. Teachers will want to know what they will gain by forfeiting some of their autonomy. Be prepared to convince them.

Parents and educators have reason for skepticism. For too long, the school-home relationship has been characterized by finger-pointing. Parents point fingers at teachers and blame them for problems they see with their children. Teachers point fingers at parents and blame them for problems they see with their students. Now you are suggesting that the finger pointing stop. Like gunslingers facing each other with pistols drawn, neither side wants to be first to let go of the trigger.

Exacerbating the suspicions between parents and educators are many schemes for parent involvement that confuse the roles of administrators, teachers, and parents. When parents become involved in decisions regarding curriculum, teacher competence, and school budgets, principals and teachers may feel rightfully threatened. The school community promotes concerted effort, but it also clarifies roles. The school community expectations clearly differentiate the responsibilities of school community members.

Building a school community begins as a labor of love for a few committed souls. As a school community's benefits compound, its allies grow in number and its joys become incentives for its further development.

Sometimes the roadblocks to school community will be overcome by good human relations – understanding the perspectives of others. Sometimes they will be overcome by good work – producing solid evidence of the benefits of school community. Sometimes the roadblocks will be overcome by sheer force of will. Building a school community begins as a labor of love for a few committed souls. As a school community's benefits compound, its allies grow in number and its joys become incentives for its further development. Enjoy your search for community in your school!

ADDENDUM

Franklin Elementary School

After meeting to discuss their values, the good people of Franklin School followed the process of establishing a school community. A school council was formed, and the three values of studying, reading, and decency were adopted by the school council as the school community values of the Franklin Elementary School Community.

Following is the Constitution of the Franklin Elementary School Community, developed by the Franklin School Council. Its procedures and guidelines are exemplary and provide a sound model for other schools.

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Franklin Elementary School

Constitution of the Franklin School Community

Preamble

A community is a collection of people who share common values and regulate their lives in accordance with these values. A school community is a collection of people associated with a school who share common values about education and regulate their lives in accordance with these values. The students, parents, teachers, administrators, and staff members of Franklin Elementary School form a school community in order to articulate their educational values and regulate their lives in accordance with these values.

A school community is a collection of people associated with a school who share common values about education and regulate their lives in accordance with these values.

Section I: Representation

A. Leadership of the Principal

The principal of Franklin Elementary School is the educational leader of the school community. Vested in the position of the principal is the responsibility to work with teachers, parents, school staff and students to integrate the educational values of the school community into the practices of the school and the home. The principal will chair the school council, implement education programs for teachers and parents, and direct school-home communication toward the aims of the school community.

B. School Council

1. Purpose and Responsibilities

The Franklin School Community will elect a school council to:

a. Adopt school community values,

b. Restate the values as goals for all students,

c. Prepare expectations to assist teachers, parents, and students in making their practices congruent with the school community values.

d. Amend values, goals, and expectations as needed,

e. Assist the principal with education of teachers to acquaint teachers with the expectations,

f. Assist the principal with parent education efforts to acquaint parents with the expectations,

The school council's responsibilities and powers are subordinate to those of the Board of Education, and the school council shall, in no way, act in a manner contrary to the policies of the Board of Education.

g. Assist the principal in using school-home communication to promote the values of the school community and their corresponding expectations, and

h. Prepare an annual school community report explaining school community values, goals, and expectations, and describing school community activities.

The school council's responsibilities and powers are subordinate to those of the Board of Education, and the school council shall, in no way, act in a manner contrary to the policies of the Board of Education.

2. Election of Members

The school council will consist of seven members: the principal, two teachers, and four parents of currently enrolled students. This constitution may be amended to alter the composition of the school council, but the number of parents on the school council must be greater than the number of other members. Parent members of the school council may not be employees of the school.

Members of the school council will be determined as follows:

a. The principal will serve on the school council by virtue of his position and will chair its proceedings.

b. The teacher members will be elected by the teaching faculty through a nomination and election process conducted by the teaching faculty.

c. The parent members will be elected by the parents at large through a nomination and election process conducted by the parent organization. Parent members of the School Council need not be members of the

parent organization, but they must have children currently enrolled at the school.

3. Terms of Office

Members of the school council, other than the principal, will serve two-year terms. The terms will be staggered so that half the teacher members and half the parent members will be subject to election each year. The initial school council will consist of:

a. one teacher elected for a one-year term and one teacher elected for a two-year term, and

b. two parents elected for a one-year term and two parents elected for a two-year term.

All subsequent terms will be for two years.

The school council's first act will be to adopt a set of . . . values which, in the judgment of the school council, represent the common core of educational values held by school community members.

4. Vacancies

Vacancies on the school council will be filled by appointment of the principal, approved by a majority vote of the school council. An appointed member of the school council will serve for the duration of the term of the person he/she replaces. When a teacher ceases to be a member of the school's teaching faculty, that teacher will no longer be a member of the school council. When a parent ceases to have a child enrolled in the school, that parent will no longer be a member of the school council.

Section II: Value Base

A. School Community Values

The school council's first act will be to adopt a set of three values which, in the judgment of the school council, represent the common core of educational values held by school community members. These values will be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the school council. A school community value is defined as an ability or characteristic that school community members believe is fundamentally desirable for all Franklin School students. To be included as a school community value, the ability or characteristic must be:

1. Considered valuable by most, if not all, school community members,
2. Attainable by all students,
3. Achieved through learning, including learning at home as well as learning at school,
4. Applicable to all areas of the school program rather than to specific subject areas, and
5. Achieved through the combined efforts of the students, parents, and teachers.

After the school council develops expectations for the pursuit of school community goals, the principal will conduct an education program for teachers.

Once established, the school community values remain in place until they are amended by a two-thirds vote of the school council. School community values will be reviewed annually and will be amended no more frequently than once per year. After the first year, additional values may be added by the same procedures which apply to the original three values.

B. School Community Goals

The school council will restate each value as a school community goal for all of its students. These goal statements will be approved by a two-thirds vote of the school council.

C. School Community Expectations

The school council will develop expectations to assist students, parents, and teachers in pursuing the goals of the school community. These expectations will be approved by a two-thirds vote of the school council at least 60 days prior to the beginning of each school year. Expectations may be amended annually.

Section III: Education of Teachers and Parents

A. Education of Teachers

After the school council develops expectations for the pursuit of school community goals, the principal will conduct an education program for teachers. The program will be based on the expectations of the school community. Subsequently, an education program for teachers will be held at the beginning of each school year to explain modifications in values and expectations approved by the school council.

B. Parent Education

Parents will be informed of the expectations established by the school council and will have the opportunity to learn effective means for meeting the school community's expectations.

The principal, with the assistance of the school council, will develop short courses for parents. In these courses, parents will learn together in small groups under the direction of previously trained parents. They will learn to meet the school community's expectations at home with their children. The courses will focus on practical application of the expectations and will provide parents an opportunity to discuss their progress. Parents who complete a course will receive certificates. Parents who complete a course may serve as leaders to direct other groups of parents.

The principal, with the assistance of the school council, will develop short courses for parents. In these courses, parents will learn together in small groups under the direction of previously trained parents. They will learn to meet the school community's expectations at home with their children.

Section IV: School-Home Communication

In addition to the formal education programs for teachers and parents, the values of the school community will be bolstered through school-home communication. The principal will use school-home communication to emphasize the values of the school community and the expectations established by the school council.

Not more than 30 days prior to be beginning of each school year, the school council will complete a school community report that will include the school community values, goals, and expectations; a summary of school community activities from the previous year; and a description of school community activities for the coming year. This report will be made available to parents and teachers.

Section V: Common Experience

Activities, programs, and policies that involve or affect all students of Franklin School contribute to the school community. Common experiences will be encouraged, and the school council will seek and offer suggestions for such experiences, especially those that relate to the values of the school community.

Section VI: Association

Members of a community must have the opportunity to associate with one another. Franklin School will plan activities that bring families and school staff into association. Franklin School will plan activities that bring children of various grade levels into association. Franklin School will use college students and senior citizens to add a rich, intergenerational dimension to the school community.

Franklin School Community Report #1

Values, Goals, and Expectations

The school council of the Franklin School Community has adopted three school community values, has restated these values as school community goals, and has established expectations to assist students, parents, and teachers in pursuing these goals. The values, goals, and expectations adopted by the Franklin School Council are outlined below:

School Community Value: STUDYING

School Community Goal: **Because the Franklin School Community values studying, it is the goal of the Franklin School Community that all students learn to study and become disciplined, skilled, and self-directed students.**

School Community Expectations:

Teachers	Parents	Students
Assign homework— • frequently • directly related to in-class work • to master rather than introduce material • graded, counted toward report card grade, returned to student, often marked with comments particular to student. Teach students **how** to study within context of subject.	Establish study time at home that is no less than 10 minutes per grade level per day, 5 days per week, not limited to homework. Establish study place at home that is quiet, well-lit, where student sits. Monitor study time and offer praise, encouragement.	Study at home a minimum of 10 minutes per grade level per day, 5 days per week, not limited to homework assignments. Study sitting up in a quiet, well-lit place. Plan study time to avoid conflicts with other activities. Grades 4–12, keep an assignment notebook. Complete and turn in all assignments.

School Community Value: READING

School Community Goal: **Because the Franklin School Community values reading, it is the goal of the Franklin School Community that all students learn to read well, read often, and enjoy reading.**

School Community Expectations:

Teacher	Parent	Student
Integrate the books of the shared reading program into lessons and activities.	Read the books in the shared reading program.	Read the books in the shared reading program.
Read to students frequently.	Read to children of all ages.	Read to family.
Have students read each day.	Encourage children to read to parents and siblings.	Listen to family read.
Make "Writing About Reading" assignments.	Talk about reading with children.	Talk about reading.
Encourage discussion about reading.	Hold family reading time at home.	Write about reading

School Community Value: DECENCY

School Community Goal: **Because the Franklin School Community values decency, it is the goal of the Franklin School Community that all students learn to treat other people fairly, tolerantly, and respectfully, to use good manners, and to display common courtesy.**

School Community Expectations:

Teacher	Parent	Student
Demonstrate decency by example.	Demonstrate decency by example.	Behave and treat other people decently.
Teach and reinforce table manners, telephone manners, greetings, and introductions.	Teach and reinforce table manners, telephone manners, greetings, and introductions.	Exhibit good table manners and telephone manners.
Teach and encourage children to pay and receive sincere compliments.	Teach and encourage children to pay and receive sincere compliments.	Make proper introductions. Greet people warmly and respectfully.
Encourage children to understand the perspective of other people – to be empathetic.	Encourage children to understand the perspective of other people – to be empathetic.	Look for the good in other people, pay sincere compliments
Teach and reinforce respect for parents and teachers.	Teach and reinforce respect for parents and teachers.	Receive compliments gracefully.
Teach and expect good classroom demeanor.	Expect good demeanor at home and in the classroom.	Respect teachers, parents and peers.
		Exhibit good demeanor at home and in school.

Education of Parents and Teachers

Parent Education

A special committee of parents and teachers (parent education committee) has developed a curriculum for three courses—"Studying at Home," "Reading at Home," and "Decency is Everyone's Concern." Parents will meet for two sessions in each course. The parent education committee will teach the courses.

Teachers will plan to integrate the school community expectations into their teaching. Each month, the principal will meet with teachers to discuss progress and share suggestions.

Teacher Education

The principal and school council have designed a workshop for teachers for the beginning of the school year. At the workshop, teachers will plan to integrate the school community expectations into their teaching. Each month, the principal will meet with teachers to discuss progress and share suggestions.

School-Home Communication

Parent-Teacher Conferences

The agenda for parent-teacher conferences will include a discussion of study at home, homework, reading, and the child's progress toward the goal of decency. Parents will be asked to report progress in establishing the habits of studying and reading at home. Teachers will report student's performance on homework. Teachers and parents will discuss their roles in assisting the child's development. The parent-teacher conferences will include discussion of other matters as determined by the principal, the teacher, and the parents.

Report Cards

Homework will count for a significant part of the report card grade. The report card will provide a separate rating for the quality and regularity of homework assignments completed by the student. The report card will also be used as a two-way communication tool by asking parents to rate the student's progress in establishing the habits of studying and reading at home.

School Newsletter

The Franklin School Newsletter will include articles by teachers, parents, and students that describe means for improving studying, reading, and decency. The meaning and importance of these school community values will be explained and reinforced by articles prepared by the principal.

Common Experience

Shared Reading Program

The school council of the Franklin School Community has recommended the implementation of a shared reading program. This program calls for the selection of two books for each grade level to receive special attention in the curriculum of all subject areas, in the activities of the school, and in the home. The Board of Education of Franklin Elementary School has authorized the purchase of paperback editions of these books. Each child will receive copies of the books appropriate to his/her grade level. These books will be selected by a special committee consisting of the principal, the school librarian, one teacher member of the school council, and two parent members of the school council.

This program calls for the selection of two books for each grade level to receive special attention in the curriculum of all subject areas, in the activities of the school, and in the home.

Association

Among Students

Franklin School will begin a Big Brother/Big Sister program, allowing 7th and 8th grade students to assist in lower grade classes as readers.

Family-School

Franklin School will host an annual Reading Festival at which students will perform skits based on books from the shared reading program. Parents will be asked to read from their favorite books or tell stories. Teachers will talk about books that are important in their lives.

Intergenerational

Franklin School will initiate a grandparents program, using volunteer senior citizens to help students plan and monitor study schedules.

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